Commentary
June 2003

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Victor Davis Hanson

The New Gloomsayers
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Countrymen—A Story
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Jonathan Kay

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Mark Falcoff

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Books in Review
James Q. Wilson • David Pryce-Jones • Dan Seligman
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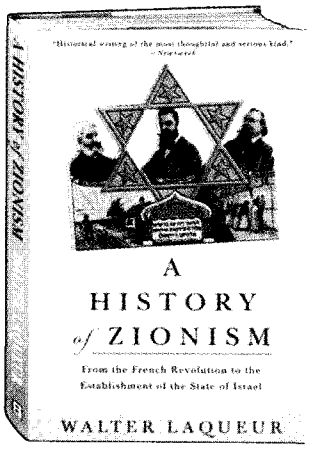

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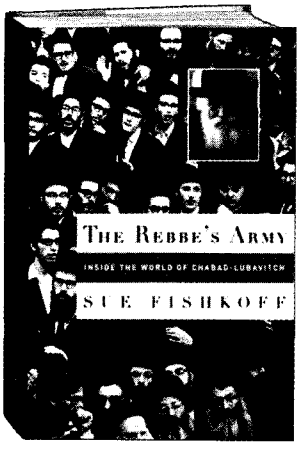

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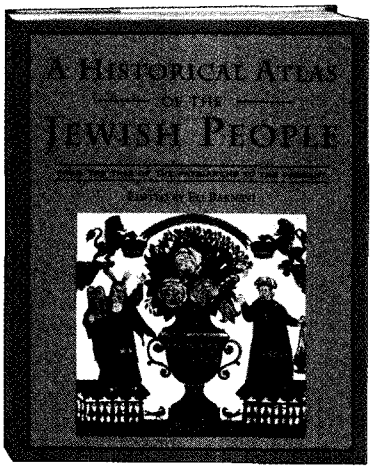

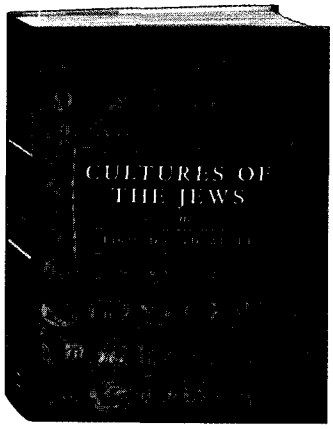

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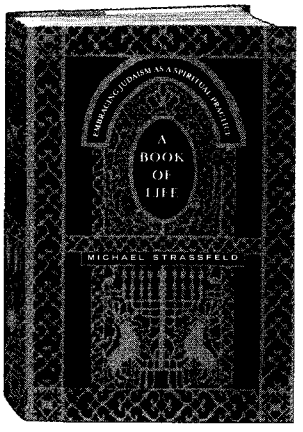

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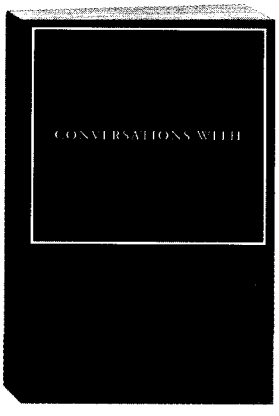

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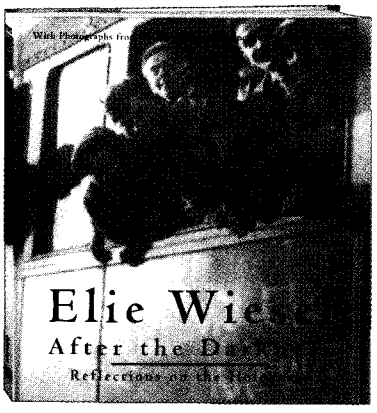

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COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) by the American Jewish Committee. EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022. Telephone: (212) 891-1400. Fax: (212) 891-6700. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Letters intended for publication may be edited. Single copy is $4.50; $45 a year, 2 years $79, 3 years $109. Add $11.00 per year for subscriptions to Canada and Mexico, $19.00 for all other foreign destinations. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th Street, New York, NY 10022.

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Indexed in *Reader's Guide*, *Book Review Digest*, and elsewhere. Available in reference systems produced by ProQuest (800) 521-0600 and the Gale Group (800) 877-4253. U.S. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors Inc., 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870. Printed in the U.S.A.

WEBSITE: www.commentarymagazine.com

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Commentary
June 2003

Letters from Readers

North Korea

To the Editor:

Joshua Muravchik's argument that the U.S. should consider initiating military action against North Korea ignores the immense harm that such an attack would do to the American-led international order, especially in the wake of our ill-conceived war against Iraq, which has severely undermined the American alliance system ["Facing Up to North Korea," March]. We should make it clear to both North *and* South Korea that the United States will strike if it is obvious that the North is within hours of launching a nuclear-tipped missile at Tokyo. But beyond such a situation, the military option is too risky.

North Korea has nuclear weapons, but the U.S. can deter the regime from using them. Pyongyang can engage in nuclear proliferation, but Washington can make it clear to Kim Jong Il that he will be held responsible for any use of North Korean-supplied fissile material. Deterrence must be calibrated to the specifics of North Korea's tyranny, and should be more explicit. But we should remember that the key American interest in northeast Asia is not North Korea but Japan and South Korea. Attacking North Korea, unless it initiated a war, could destroy our relations with both of those rich liberal democracies.

In dealing with North Korea, we must keep some facts in mind. First, the atomic bomb is old technology that many nations—perhaps soon a majority of Asian countries—can master. Eliminating North Korea will thus do little to end proliferation.

Second, North Korea is a declining state that sooner or later will collapse. America's primary task is to keep the peace and wait for its downfall. Initiating regime change makes sense only if South Korea fully supports it and the risks are limited.

Third, North Korea is in Korea, not in North America, and it is up to South Korea to take the lead in dealing with it. The U.S. may need to take some actions to deter North Korea and achieve regional stability—and this may displease Seoul—but whenever possible, such actions should be avoided.

Finally, Bush's Iraq policy has fueled anti-American sentiment worldwide, alienated many U.S. allies, and divorced governments that support us from their voters. This limits our options toward Pyongyang because, regardless of their justification, American military operations against North Korea would generate an anti-U.S. backlash. With opposition to American policies already very high overseas, the consequences could be detrimental to U.S. interests.

Robert Dujarric
Hudson Institute
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

Joshua Muravchik offers his usual sharp analysis and lively writing in "Facing Up to North Korea." And he may be right that, in a worst case, war—or at least preemptive attacks on North Korea's nuclear facilities that risk provoking an all-out confrontation—may be necessary. But that scenario is so horrible that we should look for every reasonable way to avoid it. In his consideration of our options, Mr. Muravchik leaves out one approach.

Rather than focusing exclusively on the nuclear issue, and thus leaving ourselves open to blackmail, the United States should broaden the negotiating agenda with North Korea—and then negotiate, bilaterally if necessary. But we should be tough in our demands, even as we offer major incentives in the event of North Korean cooperation.

The Bush administration was right to state, early in 2001, that North Korea

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would need to reduce its threatening conventional-force posture if it wanted more aid and diplomatic relations with the United States. Although its nuclear and missile programs constitute the more immediate threat, as the Clinton administration rightly concluded, North Korea's conventional forces are unacceptably large and dangerous. They could produce tens of thousands of casualties in Seoul through artillery attacks alone. They gobble up perhaps 20 to 25 percent of North Korea's feeble gross domestic product, so any policy leaving them intact will preclude hope for gradual economic reform.

Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington should propose a bargain. On the one hand, Pyongyang would come clean on its nuclear programs, allowing on-site inspections and resealing the unprocessed plutonium that is at immediate issue today; stop selling missiles abroad and ban the testing of long-range missiles; allow all Japanese kidnapping victims and their families to leave North Korea; and make disproportionately large (though not unilateral) cuts in conventional forces while reducing its military capabilities near the demilitarized zone.

In exchange, South Korea, Japan, and the U.S. would provide substantial economic aid and keep food and fuel oil flowing, on humanitarian grounds and as a show of good faith. Much of the funding could come from Tokyo, since Japan is expected eventually to provide up to $10 billion as compensation for its colonization of North Korea. We would sign a peace treaty, open diplomatic relations, and provide technical aid so North Korea could begin to reform.

North Korean leaders are too obstinate and unimaginative to think of this type of policy on their own, and the new South Korean president, Roh Moo Hyun, has a lot of other things to think about now. That means there is a critical role for Washington. The time to play it is now.

MICHAEL O'HANLON
Brookings Institution
Washington, D.C.

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

I am afraid I find Robert Dujarric's arguments a bit disjointed. His proposed warning to North Korea about a strike on Tokyo mystifies me. If they hit Osaka, it is OK? Or Pusan? Or Anchorage? And how are we to know hours in advance that they are about to do so, much less what their designated target is?

As for Mr. Dujarric's proposal to warn Kim Jong Il that "he will be held responsible for any use of North Korean-supplied fissile material," that is a bluff that will be as obvious to Kim as it is to me. If terrorists detonate a nuclear bomb in an American city, how exactly will we be sure where the fissionable material originated? Surely we would not strike back at North Korea unless we were certain it was the source. And even if we knew the stuff came from Pyongyang, Mr. Dujarric apparently does not really mean we should take military action, for in his next breath he tells us we must not attack North Korea "unless it initiated a war."

Yes, atomic bombs have been around nearly 60 years, but if making them is as easy as Mr. Dujarric implies—it is not—then our only hope of stemming their spread is precisely to provide big disincentives for going nuclear. "Eliminating North Korea" might in fact have exactly that effect. The North Korean regime is the world's most barbarous, and regime change is desirable regardless of the views of Seoul. Of course, when change comes, it will be up to the South to say whether or not it wishes to be reunited with the North.

Finally, military action against Pyongyang would, I agree, exacerbate anti-Americanism elsewhere. But this might be the price we will have to pay if there is no other way to stop Pyongyang from transferring nuclear materials or weapons to other rogue regimes—as it has now explicitly threatened to do. What consequences does Mr. Dujarric see as more "detrimental to U.S. interests" than the arming of rogue regimes and terrorists with weapons of mass destruction?

Thanks to Michael O'Hanlon for his compliments. I do, though, have a little quarrel with his proposal, which has been called the "more for more" approach. If we could induce Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons and reduce its conventional forces, I agree that it would be worth giving big inducements in exchange. True, the bribery would constitute a bad precedent, but there is an awful lot at stake, and the likely eventual collapse of North Korea would take some of the luster off its success in blackmailing us. My caveat is that the inspection regime would have to be so massive and intrusive as to ensure that we did not repeat our experience with Iraq in the 1980's, when a hidden nuclear program was carried almost to completion right under the nose of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I have the gravest doubts that Pyongyang would agree to anything of the kind.

"Shacking Up"

TO THE EDITOR:

Kay S. Hymowitz is quite right that most Americans want to marry, and it is certainly a good bet that children are better off when born to married rather than to unmarried mothers ["The Cohabitation Blues," March]. But as the lead author of the American Law Institute (ALI) report she cites, what puzzles me is her suggestion that this conclusion somehow casts doubt on the wisdom of the ALI's recommendation that those who for years share a life together, whether married or not, should have the same financial claims against one another when their relationship ends.

The issue, after all, is how to treat not casual cohabiters but unmarried persons who have conducted themselves as a committed couple. If an unmarried mother in such a relationship sacrifices earnings to serve as the children's primary caretaker, why should she be denied the same share of the property acquired by the couple over their years together, or the financial assistance from her former partner, that a married mother would receive? Since the great majority of long-term, unmarried couples do not make prior

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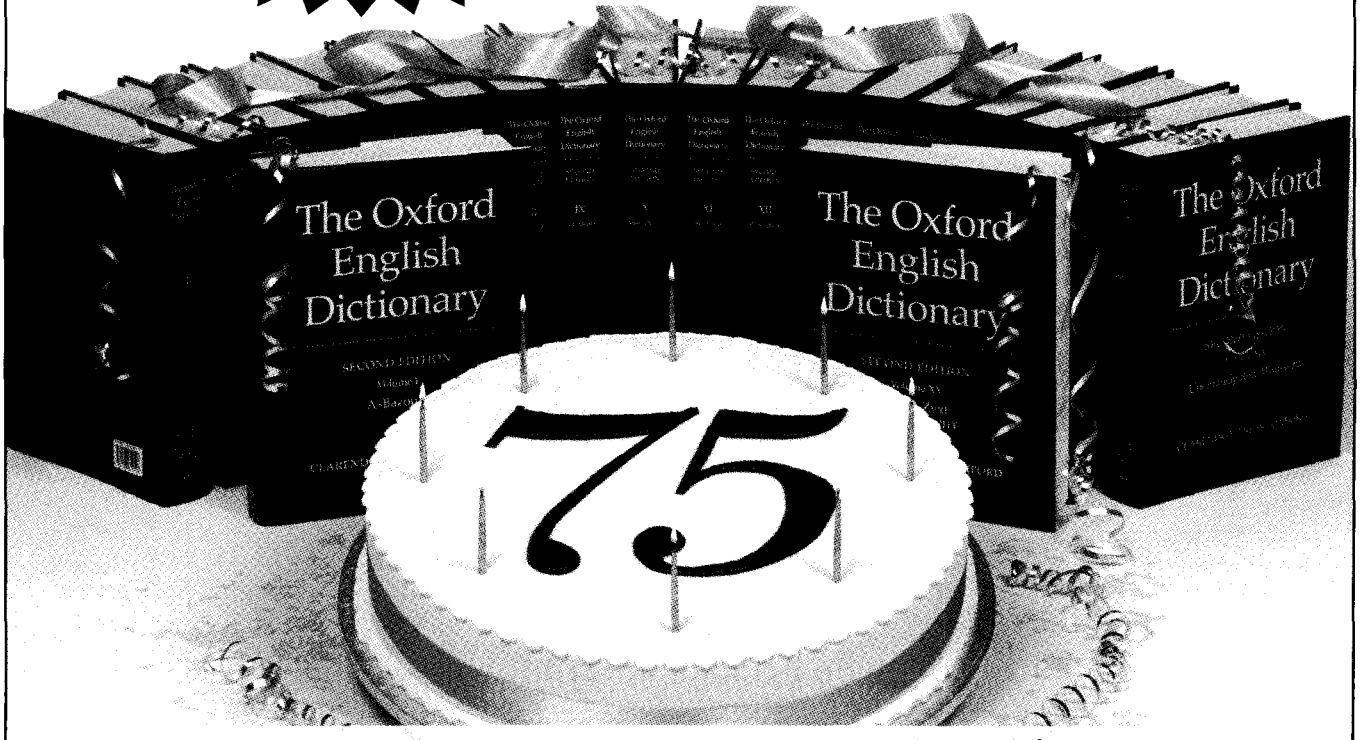

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agreements concerning these matters, the law must decide for itself what is fair.

There is no reason to think that allowing these claims would keep cohabiters from marrying. The decision to marry is influenced by social and economic realities, not by legal rules. For couples that remain together for five years, the likelihood of marrying rises with income, an effect that is particularly strong among African Americans, who have had the steepest decline in marriage rates. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, as annual family income goes from under $25,000 to $50,000 or more, the chance of marriage between African American cohabiters rises from 39 percent to 71 percent.

In any event, one must also note that long-term unmarried relationships between men and women are not common; most such couples marry or split up. For that reason, the ALI's recommendations would have their greatest impact on same-sex couples, whose failure to marry can hardly be treated as voluntary.

IRA MARK ELLMAN
College of Law
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR:

Kay S. Hymowitz criticizes, on normative grounds, an American Law Institute report that recommends reforming the country's laws on the dissolution of marriage and the termination of long-term nonmarital cohabitation. As one of the authors of the report, I agree (as does the ALI) that marriage better serves the interests of society than does nonmarital cohabitation. But the primary thrust of family-dissolution law is remedial rather than normative; it must deal with families as it finds them, not as it would like them to be.

For the last quarter-century, American law has regulated the termination of long-term nonmarital cohabitation under a framework introduced by the California Supreme Court in *Marvin* v. *Marvin* (1976). But this framework, which relies on the law of contract and quasi-contract, has proven to be substantively and administratively wanting. The ALI took a new tack, following the lead of other English-speaking countries like Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. At the termination of a stable, long-term relationship of cohabitation, the ALI would like to see the courts apply largely the same rules as govern property distribution and spousal support in a case of divorce, unless the parties have contracted otherwise. The purpose of this treatment is not "to celebrate" nonmarital cohabitation, as Kay Hymowitz suggests, but merely to distribute equitably the financial gains of the relationship and the financial losses occasioned by its end.

To the extent that the rules of dissolution proposed by the ALI would have any normative impact, they should *encourage* marriage for those cohabiters who have sought to enjoy the relational benefits of marriage without undertaking legal responsibilities to their partners. The ALI rules would remove this incentive to avoid marriage.

GRACE GANZ BLUMBERG
UCLA Law School
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Kay S. Hymowitz's reasoning in "The Cohabitation Blues" is undermined by her fundamentally flawed presumption that cohabitation and commitment are mutually exclusive. Like the corollary that a marriage license links people for life, this is a canard.

The number of unmarried couples in the United States is skyrocketing, and new census data show that four out of ten such households include children. These families deserve the social and legal equity that the American Law Institute recommends.

ASHTON APPLEWHITE
Alternatives to Marriage Project
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

I very much enjoyed Kay S. Hymowitz's article on cohabitation. My wife of ten years and I lived together for an illuminating six months before deciding to "tie the knot," during which time we evolved from a state of emotional commitment that whispered "maybe" to one that proudly declared "I will." More tellingly, we came to recognize a solidifying desire to share the future cycles of life and to enter those cycles in firm partnership. Our period of cohabitation implied that we had not yet reached that point.

I agree that the state should not sanction nonmarital arrangements. Indeed, its refusal to do so properly recognizes the difference in levels of commitment between married and unmarried couples. A person who does not expect a full-fledged commitment from his or her mate should not expect the state to subsidize a partial commitment. Benefits for nonspouses, damages for "marital" dissolution, and "domestic partnership" status for unmarried couples fly in the face of the participants' own expectations.

The one large exception, of course, is gay couples. In virtually every jurisdiction, gay marriage is impossible. Here, I believe, we cannot have it both ways. If gay marriage is not allowed, and benefits and other legal privileges are also withheld from nonmarital "spouses," gay men and women are essentially denied the options afforded to straight couples. We therefore need either to revisit the issue of sanctioning gay marriage or to make an awkward exception with respect to gay partnerships, giving them various benefits and rights denied to other unmarried couples.

JEFFREY STILLMAN
Pacifica, California

TO THE EDITOR:

One false and harmful message conveyed by the sexual revolution is that cohabitation is a sure way to find out if a couple has the basis for a happy and enduring marriage. A recent study by the National Center for Health Statistics reveals that, to the contrary, couples that live together before getting married are more likely to divorce. As its authors concluded, "After ten years, 40 percent of [previously] cohabitating couples had broken up, versus 31 percent of those who did not live together first." A 1991 study by the social scientists Elizabeth Thompson and Ugo Collela found that, among the 13,000 adults surveyed, couples who had lived together be-

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fore marriage reported "greater marital conflict and poorer communication than married couples who had never cohabitated."

Clearly, as Mother Teresa observed in her 1982 commencement address at Harvard, the most precious gift a young man can give to a young lady, and a young lady to a young man, is a virgin heart, a virgin soul.

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW
Greenville, Mississippi

KAY S. HYMOWITZ writes:

Both Ira Mark Ellman and Grace Ganz Blumberg, two of the reporters for the ALI report I criticize in my article, imply that their recommendations are simply an attempt to be fair to cohabiters and would have no impact on whether or not people marry. Mr. Ellman asserts "the decision to marry is influenced by social and economic realities, not by legal rules"; Grace Blumberg observes that the recommendations are "remedial rather than normative."

This strikes me as specious. As both ALI authors surely know, the law defines what marriage is. It tells us who is married and who is not. The law's function in defining the boundaries of marriage is especially important in a pluralistic society, where other forms of authority are too diverse to adhere to a cultural consensus. The ALI proposals would have it that marriage is essentially the same as cohabitation; married couples have simply observed "formalities" while cohabiters have not. This isn't normative? How can you possibly know that such a radical redefinition would have no impact on how people behave? And, by the way, if the distinction between marriage and cohabitation is so superficial, why then, as both Mark Ellman and Grace Blumberg concede, are children better off in married-couple families?

As for the question of gay cohabiters raised by both Mr. Ellman and Jeffrey Stillman, the most recent census data indicate that their number represents significantly less than 1 percent of total American households. There may be a need to address some of the legal problems faced by these couples, but given the stakes—and given the relatively small numbers of people involved—equating marriage with "shacking up" is not the way to do it.

Ashton Applewhite reminds us that there do exist committed cohabiting couples who remain unmarried. Though their numbers are quite small among the ranks of couples living together, he is certainly correct; I know a number of such couples myself. But these are people who are *choosing not to marry*. Many of them are distinctly hostile to the institution; he can check his own website for examples. What puzzles me is why Mr. Applewhite and the ALI would respond to what I take to be a conscious decision on the part of some Americans to choose an alternative family form by proposing to regulate it as if it were not. Do they have reason to believe that people who decide to cohabit rather than marry do not know what they are doing?

Finally, Haven Gow is correct that living with a future spouse before tying the knot seems to do nothing to assure a more successful marriage. As for Mother Teresa's recipe for marriage—"a virgin heart, a virgin soul"—we will have to take her word for it. Given what we know about human nature, we are unlikely to be able to test the proposition any time soon.

Afghanistan

TO THE EDITOR:

Frederick W. Kagan's critique of U.S. strategy in the war in Afghanistan is half right ["Did We Fail in Afghanistan?," March]. He is correct to argue that, at the start of that campaign, the U.S. did not deploy a ground force large enough to ensure the destruction of al Qaeda and control over the country. He is also correct to assert that U.S. operations in Afghanistan emphasized the use of airpower. But he is incorrect when he suggests that the United States should have—or could have—deployed a multidivision ground force in Afghanistan in time to ensure the capture of fleeing senior al Qaeda leaders. He is also wrong when he ascribes the decision not to attempt such a deployment to the Bush administration's infatuation with airpower.

Mr. Kagan simply does not appreciate the difficulty of deploying such a ground force halfway around the world. He argues that the 24 days between the time planning for war began and the bombs began falling should have been sufficient "to put a substantial portion of a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) on the ground in Afghanistan." This force, in turn, could have swiftly established bases for "a substantial influx of troops from the 101st Airborne and its parent XVIII Airborne Corps," making possible their deployment within 40 days from the decision to go to war.

The idea of moving a force this size into a country like Afghanistan in the timeframe proposed by Mr. Kagan boggles the mind. An MEF consists of approximately 45,000 Marines, several hundred tanks and armored vehicles, thousands of trucks and support vehicles, more than 100 artillery pieces, and 300 or so helicopters and aircraft. The 101st Airborne alone has some 17,000 soldiers with 260 helicopters. The XVIII Airborne Corps consists of tens of thousands of people, thousands of vehicles, weapons systems, and kilotons of equipment. These forces required more than 40 days to deploy to Kuwait and attain combat-ready status before the war in Iraq, even though their equipment was moved largely by sea. In Afghanistan, U.S. forces would have had to deploy entirely by air, and once there would have had to be resupplied largely by air.

The only rapidly deployable force in the U.S. Army is the 82nd Airborne division. Other so-called light-infantry divisions are light only in comparison to the mechanized and armored divisions. The Marine Corps can deploy the battalion-sized Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU), three of which are on continuous patrol around the world to provide rapid response. Although one MEU containing some combat vehicles and Cobra gunships was deployed in southern Afghanistan in November, Central Command considered it too light to engage Taliban forces in the Kandahar area.

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Further, it is difficult to find evidence to support Mr. Kagan's accusation that the campaign in Afghanistan was based on an infatuation with airpower. With the exception of Special Operations units, airpower was the only effective force that the U.S. could deploy rapidly. The value of these long-range bombers and naval strike forces—including carrier-based aviation, cruise-missile-capable ships, and attack submarines—cannot be underestimated. Given the difficulties associated with acquiring access to local air bases, these capabilities provide the most responsive military force available to us.

In hindsight, some additional U.S. ground forces might have been useful in the fighting around Tora Bora. But it is not clear that the postwar situation in Afghanistan requires, as Mr. Kagan suggests, a large contingent of U.S. ground forces. What is more urgently needed is a Marshall Plan for that country.

DANIEL GOURE
Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

"Did We Fail in Afghanistan?" is badly in need of balance. Frederick W. Kagan states that the Special Operations units fighting alongside local forces in the north failed to route the Taliban and al Qaeda. But he neglects to mention that large mechanized forces cannot simply roll through high mountain ranges; they depend on close air support, a tactic he is wrong to consider a new style of warfare. It was used by the U.S. Army in Vietnam, by the Marine Corps in Nicaragua in the 1920's and 30's, and even in the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

I wonder if Mr. Kagan understands the kind of logistical support required to marshal several battalions of infantry via helicopters on such short notice. He would have us believe that adding an extra Marine Expeditionary Unit or Army division would have put an end to al Qaeda. What about the caves, bunkers, and open borders? How would he have deployed these forces to capture all the fleeing elements?

STAFF SGT. SETH E. DAVIS (USMC)
Twentynine Palms, California

FREDERICK W. KAGAN writes:

Current discussions of U.S. armed forces and their future show three salient features: a wild exaggeration of the capabilities of airpower, a similar exaggeration of the limitations on ground forces, and an almost complete disregard for the political aspects of warfare. Daniel Goure and Seth E. Davis offer a number of thoughtful comments that nevertheless highlight these tendencies. In particular, they make every aspect of the deployment and use of ground forces sound difficult or impossible, with Mr. Goure referring to the "kilotons" of material that need to be moved to support a Marine Expeditionary Force and Sgt. Davis arguing that armored vehicles cannot operate in the terrain of Afghanistan. Neither of them addresses the real and serious problems that the air campaign in Afghanistan encountered, the limitations on *its* success, or the political problems that ensued from the path we pursued.

The truth is that the rapid deployment of ground forces is not as impossible as these and other writers make it out to be; that heavy forces can operate successfully both in mountainous and in urban terrain; and that the adverse political consequences of the way we now choose to wage war can far outweigh whatever technical difficulties might inhere in the use of ground forces.

Are ground forces impossibly slow to deploy? Over and over, we hear that it took fully six months to get the necessary troops to Saudi Arabia in 1990 in preparation for the first Gulf war. But that is not really so. Between mid-August and early October, a period of about eight weeks, we moved three entire divisions—the 82nd Airborne, the 101st Air Assault, and the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized)—from the U.S. to the Gulf. A pause then ensued as the political leadership considered options, only later deciding not only that we would attack Iraq's forces in Kuwait but that we would do so with two corps. In short, the total deployment period lasted six months not because we were unable to move faster but because of the incremental way we decided on what we would send and what our intentions were.

As the recent war in Iraq showed, we can deploy even faster when time really presses. The order for the 101st Air Assault Division was issued on February 6; the unit began loading its equipment onto ships on February 11; the equipment started to arrive in Kuwait on February 28; by mid-March it was ready for war. Total deployment time: about six weeks. As the war went on, it emerged that a limited number of heavy forces could be moved still faster. Thus, elements of the 1st Infantry Division (a heavy unit based in Germany), ordered to northwest Iraq in late March, flew their tanks and other equipment to an airfield that had been seized by the 173rd Airborne Brigade (stationed in Italy) and were engaged in operations two weeks later.

All of which is to say that, as I suggested in my article, we should have been able to get several battalions of the 101st Air Assault Division into position in Afghanistan before beginning operations around Tora Bora. Contrary to Mr. Goure, the problem was not that such a deployment was impossible but that little or no creativity was applied to the question at the highest levels of the administration. Instead, the movement of ground forces was simply dismissed from the outset as being "too hard"—a dismissal that itself reflected the tendency to believe that everything connected with land power is hard and everything connected with airpower is easy. We will not be able to achieve any of the "balance" that Sgt. Davis rightly demands until we approach the debate over land vs. airpower in a much less biased way.

But this entire discussion misses the main point of my article. In the immediate aftermath of our invasion, the political situation in Afghanistan was terrible. Over the ensuing months, it has deteriorated further. The reason is not that Afghanistan needs a Marshall Plan but that we pursued a military strategy detrimental to the development of a stable po-

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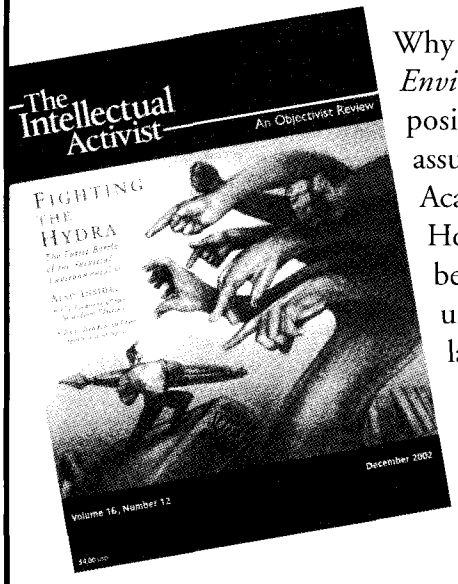

Why do the negative reviews of Bjørn Lomborg's *The Skeptical Environmentalist* merely reveal the book's strengths—while the positive reviews reveal its weaknesses? What is the common assumption that connects the films nominated for last year's Academy Awards and the foreign policy positions of "Old Europe"? How can the state of the world be seen in the surprising links between UN aid fraud in Bosnia, a concert tour by a mentally unbalanced pianist, and the dishonest accounting of a little old ladies' investment club?

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litical order in that country.

The fact that we did not use our own ground forces, whatever difficulties might have been involved in their deployment, meant that we had to rely on indigenous soldiers to do the fighting for us. The only game in town was the Northern Alliance, primarily Tajik warriors whose ranks included a number of radical Islamist groups. Since they were the ones who won the war on the ground and seized the capital, we were compelled to place them in power. But a Tajik government of Afghanistan, with or without a Pashtun figurehead, cannot be stable. What is more, since we had no significant ground forces of our own in the country when the war ended, rival warlords, using money the CIA had given them to provide us with soldiers, set up their own palatinates around the country.

The upshot is that we have had to spend more than a year trying, with very limited success, to restore central control over Afghanistan. Where there is no such central control, there can be no Marshall Plan. By using the airpower approach, we won the war and set ourselves up to lose the peace. The final outcome still hangs in the balance.

There is no denying that it is in many respects easier to employ airpower than to deploy and use ground forces, even if the difficulties attending the latter are fewer than is routinely alleged. The goal in war, however, is not to find the easiest, cheapest solution; it is to find the solution that achieves the political objective. Otherwise, there is no point in fighting at all. If we are to succeed in future conflicts, we must begin by recognizing that it is the synergy of land power, sea power, and airpower that brings rapid, decisive, and, above all, politically meaningful victories. It is astonishing how thoroughly this basic lesson of military history has been forgotten today.

A Teacher

TO THE EDITOR:

Joseph Epstein writes that he hasn't "the faintest idea" whether he was "successful" as a teacher ["Goodbye, Mr. Chipstein," February]. As one of his students at Northwestern University in the mid-1980's, perhaps I can give him a clue. Part of his success was that he did not seek above all to be a success—which in undergraduate terms means being modish, comical, and undemanding. He could be hilarious, but his remarks were funny precisely because they were expressions of a distinctive viewpoint and not a bid for the approval of his students. He once warned, for example, that the chief experiences available at the university were "fornication and fashionable ideas."

That few of his students were moved on the spot to drop either of these pursuits may explain why he is not entirely sure that he was a success. He began teaching at the very moment that "the difficulty that inspired"—Henry James's phrase for the demands posed by great art, which Mr. Epstein liked to quote—was being abandoned for what he called "the ease that deflates." The signs of a deflating academic ease were all around: growing tolerance for the ready-made assertion, feelings of superiority to great writers, disdain for style, the substitution of grievance for respect. If Mr. Epstein was less than successful as a teacher, the fault belongs to the age in which he taught. He took his lumps for shaming the devil. I was around when he published in COMMENTARY an exposé of a Marxist colleague who thought herself an agitator rather than a scholar ["A Case of Academic Freedom," September 1986], and I saw how the essay made him a pariah. Later, when one of his bitterest antagonists moved on to another job, Mr. Epstein told me, "I shall miss not talking to him."

I admired my teacher Joseph Epstein and considered him the best example of the literary life, which he showed was full of intellectual independence, wide curiosity, unremitting labor at the pleasurable task of making words obey you, a healthy skepticism about your own virtue, and a fearlessness in the face of rejection. What he said in class about great writers also applies to him: "They broaden the area of morality. They make moral distinctions seem finer—even when they do not 'teach.'"

D. G. MYERS
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

Too bad for Northwestern and its students that Joseph Epstein is turning in his grade book for good. Any professor acute enough to recognize that Joseph Conrad is "Henry James for people who like the outdoors," and graceful enough to phrase it that way, is miles ahead of the general run of theory-haunted bores hanging out in faculty lounges today.

Mr. Epstein is simply the best American essayist on active duty today, so I hope his byline will continue to appear in COMMENTARY and elsewhere—that he is not taking this retirement business too far. "Say it ain't so, Joe" has been used in another context, but the sentiment could apply here. I am sure that I am just one of many readers who consider Mr. Epstein's work one of life's small pleasures—a pleasure we would be loath to give up.

LARRY THORNBERRY
Tampa, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

I loathed Joseph Conrad and hated Henry James, but I loved Joseph Epstein's latest essay—even though it made me feel a little guilty for not being a better student of English literature in college.

DEAN HONEYCUTT
Burke, Virginia

Brothers

TO THE EDITOR:

My brother Christopher Hitchens writes that he never made a certain "preposterous, vulgar remark" which I have quoted him as having made [Letters from Readers, April]. This remark, cited by Mark Falcoff in "Watching Christopher Hitchens" [February], was, "I don't care if the Red Army waters its horses in Hendon" (not the Thames, as he says in his letter), and I repeat with absolute certainty that he did speak

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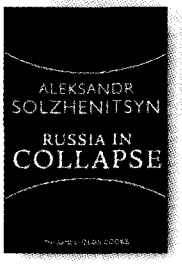

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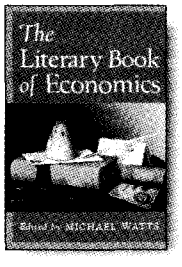

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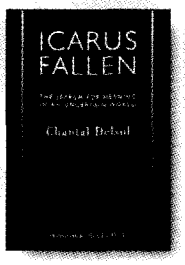

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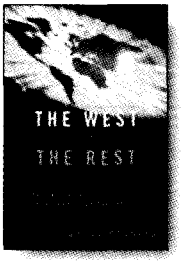

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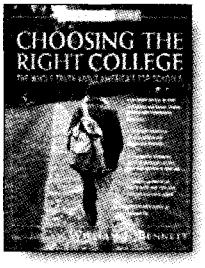

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these words one evening at my house in Oxford in the mid-1980's. I and my wife Eve, who was present, have a perfectly clear recollection of it. He made the remark during a long discussion about the issue of nuclear weapons, and particularly the deployment of U.S. cruise missiles in Britain and Germany, to which he was opposed. My view was that nuclear deterrence prevented the Soviet Union from diplomatically dominating the European continent through its immense conventional military strength. This was his response, which he plainly thought rather witty, pausing for effect before pronouncing the word "Hendon" (a notably mundane suburb of petit-bourgeois North London, the sort of place which is despised by all bien-pensant leftists).

I remember the episode so well because it was pretty much the last time we bothered to argue with each other about anything at any length, apart from various public or broadcast encounters in recent years. Before publishing the article in the London *Spectator* in which I quoted Christopher, I sent him a copy out of courtesy so that he should see it before it was printed. I would hardly have done this had I been intending to spread lies about him. I was astonished when he wrote back denying that he had used these words, and told him so. He said that if I left the quotation in the article, he would immediately say that I was lying. I said he was welcome to do so but that I was telling the truth and would stand by it. As far as I know, he has never accused me of lying in any British publication. I do not mind if he calls me a fool, since I am happy to rely on the judgment of others about that. But while I forgive him for calling me a liar, I must respond by insisting that he is mistaken.

PETER HITCHENS
Oxford, England

Corrections

In "The U.S. and Israel: The Road Ahead" by Abraham D. Sofaer (May), the academic affiliation of Sami al-Arian was incorrectly given as Florida State University; he was at the University of South Florida (page 23). Also, Hashemi Rafsanjani was incorrectly identified as the former prime minister of Iran; he is the former president (page 29). We regret these errors—ED.

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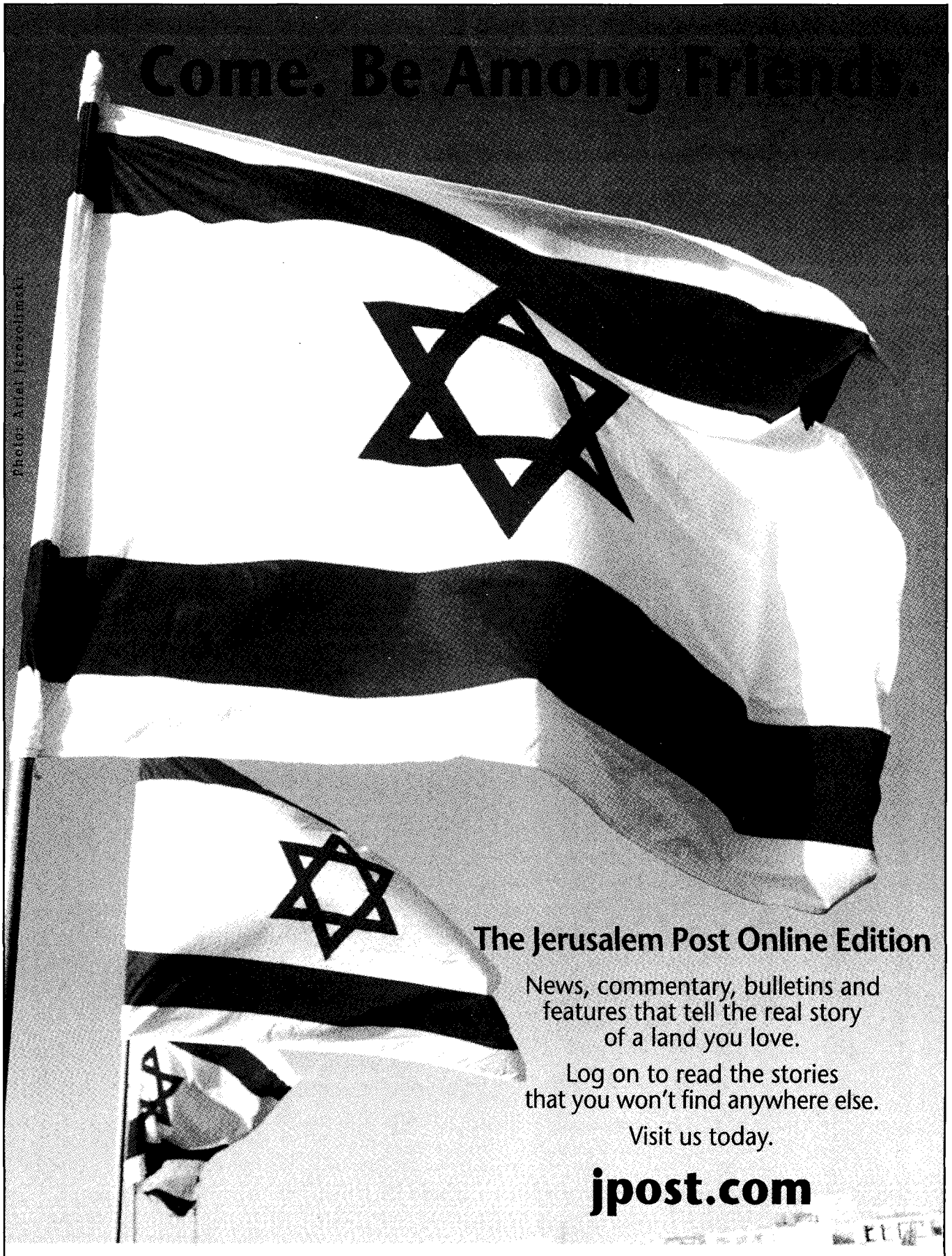
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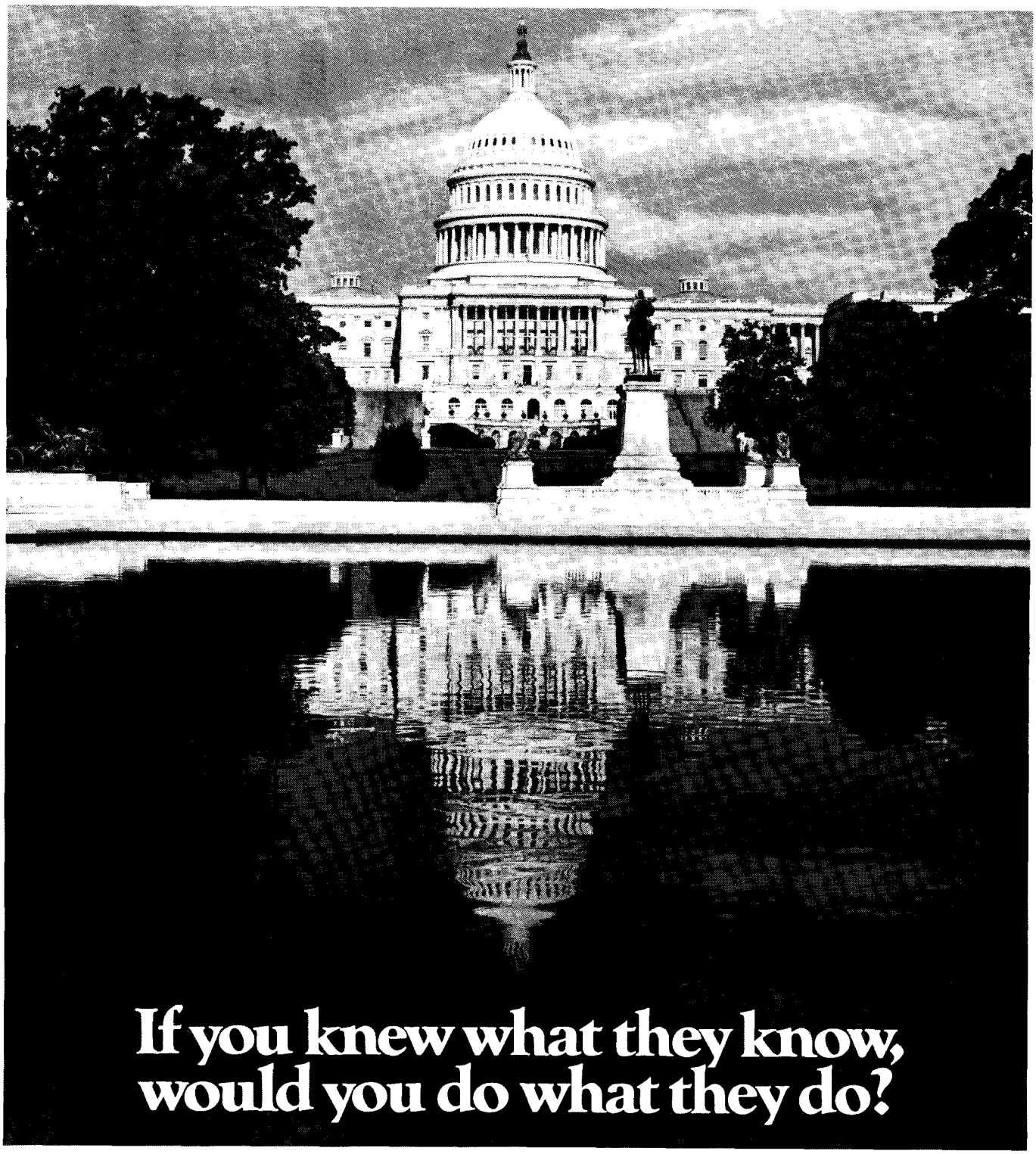

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Commentary
June 2003

Lessons of the War

Victor Davis Hanson

THE GENERAL facts about the recent war are not in much dispute. In a span of about three weeks, the United States military overran a country the size of California. It utterly obliterated Saddam Hussein's military hardware—tanks, heavy artillery, transport—and tore apart his armies. Of the approximately 110 American deaths in the course of the hostilities, fully a fourth occurred as a result of accidents, friendly fire, or peacekeeping mishaps rather than at the hands of enemy soldiers. The extraordinarily low ratio of total American casualties per number of U.S. soldiers deployed, or of American fatalities per Iraqi soldiers killed, is almost unmatched in modern military history—and an unimaginably long way from the specter of Armageddon offered up by a variety of self-proclaimed experts before the war and during its early days.

The phenomenal and rapid success of Operation Iraqi Freedom should not, however, lead us to think that it was a foregone conclusion, or blind us to the age-old obstacles to conducting military operations in the distant Middle East and surrounding environs—difficulties amply attested by the disastrous Russian experience in Afghanistan and Chechnya and past British and French debacles from Gallipoli to Algeria. Brute force does not always translate into battlefield victory, especially, as has often been the case, when logistics are strained, civilians are indistinguishable from soldiers, political considerations bridle the use of firepower, and an antagonist's defeat is not measurable by the enormous numbers falling to Western arms. No less daunting in the present instance was the surrounding geopolitical landscape: overt enemies of the United States like Syria and Iran, duplicitous friends such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and the suddenly fickle ally Turkey.

Critics of American action, drawing on memories of the first Gulf war in 1990-91, cited other prospective perils as well: burning oil fields, fouled waters, and missiles launched into Israel and Kuwait. Concerns about chemical weapons, blown bridges, exploding dams, suicide bombers, and mass executions were adduced to remind us that conquering this fully functioning criminal state would be much more hazardous than our prior experience of expelling its predatory legions from Kuwait. Saddam Hussein's military knew where we were, where we were going, and approximately when we would begin. In the operation's early days, the narrow front at Kuwait was especially vulnerable as thousands of vehicles and troops were crowded into a confined launching area. Moreover, this single point of entry lay some 400 miles distant from Iraq's northern Kurdish cities—a longer distance than the one confronting the Allied armies in World War II who left the Normandy beaches for

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON *is the author of two new books,* Mexifornia *(Encounter) and* Ripples of Battle *(Doubleday). Among his contributions to* COMMENTARY *are "'I Love Iraq, Bomb Texas'" (December 2002) and "Goodbye to Europe?" (October 2002).*

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the Siegfried line. Although retired generals and others harped on the alleged paucity of troops on the ground, it would have been no less risky to expose to missile or chemical attack a larger force—the suggested figure was 500,000 soldiers, or over half of America's aggregate front-line combat strength—concentrated in a few thousand acres.

Still another uncertainty was the disposition and likely reaction of the "Iraqi people." They were not quite enemies, like the Germans in World War II, but neither were they friendlies like the once-liberated West Europeans of that era. Saddam's subjects were, perhaps, more like the Italians *circa* 1943: people who sort of wished to be freed from a dictator—but depending on how quickly, painlessly, and profitably it could be done. In the event, they turned out to be a mixture of all three and something else altogether: on one day sullen if not exactly reluctant supporters of Saddam Hussein, on the next a mass of blameless individuals happy to have been extricated from the grip of their despotic overlords, and on the next looters and destroyers of their native heritage and infrastructure, blaming the Americans for their own license and demanding our immediate exit.

HOW, THEN, did we pull it off? In lieu of overwhelming numbers and strategic flexibility, the key was speed and tactical surprise. By forgoing a long bombing campaign but starting the land invasion in tandem with precision strikes on the regime's grandees, we caught the Baathists off guard, killing a fair number, and thereby accomplished a number of critical pre-battle goals. Motorized columns raced to Baghdad, bypassing resistance and overwhelming Iraqi command-and-control before shocked Iraqi generals could react and reorganize. If one thinks of the densely populated Mesopotamian corridor as prey that had long been in the grip of a kind of snake, the idea was to decapitate the beast in Baghdad and thus loosen its grasp far more quickly than could be accomplished by hacking away at its multifarious 300-mile-long coils. There were also political considerations behind the decision not to soften up Iraq by air for weeks on end as we had done in the earlier Gulf war, or later in the cases of Serbia and Afghanistan; despite the greater peril to our forces in the field, we felt we could not ruin the heavy infrastructure of the country, suffer through weeks of televised images of collateral damage caused by us, allow Saddam to devour the resources of his own people, or endure endless criticism of our alleged timidity about putting "boots on the ground."

The Secretary of Defense and his generals were castigated for a purported "pause" during the first week of operations due to adverse weather and the need to resupply. Their alleged sins included not only insufficient troops or armor in place but also a failure to produce spontaneous local uprisings as advertised. But these criticisms missed the vast revolution in arms that had transpired in the twelve years since the first Gulf war (not to mention the logical point that an imprisoned and brutally subjugated people might need a little time to display its enthusiasm openly). As our troops fought fatigue and sandstorms, 3,000 air sorties a day were nevertheless methodically whittling down the Republican Guard to individual tanks and batteries. When occasionally directing their classical massed formations against the outnumbered American columns, the Iraqis only provided better targets for our jets, flying far above the oil-fired smoke, whirlwinds, and clouds. Alternatively, by breaking up their armored divisions to avoid our bombs, or by taking refuge in mosques, hospitals, and schools, they forfeited any chance to concentrate their fire, made ad-hoc desertions more likely, and diluted their strength, huddling in weak pockets that could be isolated and picked off.

It is easy to exaggerate the effect of airpower in replacing the punch of armored divisions, but it is considerable. How many tanks were 1,000 American planes worth as they dropped their smart bombs on individual Baathist houses and small groups of the Republican Guard? Tacticians still have not done the calibrations. In any case, and notwithstanding charges that Donald Rumsfeld has emasculated the Army, what was proved by our deployment of 10,000 Special Forces to organize the entire northern front, by the flexible use of the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions, and by the race of the 3rd Mechanized Division to Baghdad was the versatility of the new infantry itself, which can no longer be caricatured as slow, immobile, or one-dimensional. Victory could have unfolded even more quickly had our geopolitics been as inspired as our military operations: a northern front headed by the 20,000-man 4th Infantry Division, strengthened by 60,000 Kurdish irregulars, and covered by 300 bombers flying freely out of Turkey would have ensured the encirclement of Baghdad in five or six days.

Rumsfeld was also slurred for remarking on the superiority of professional troops over draftees. But his point remained valid. The new American military proved lethal beyond its numbers, as near-adolescents without combat experience showed them-

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selves to be more adept at street fighting than the so-called Saddam *fedayeen*. What has become clear from the war is that, from year to year, the American military has increased its lethality geometrically, not incrementally. What has also become undeniable is the moral character of our forces. Neither bloodthirsty nor triumphalist, American soldiers came across on our television screens as idealists eager to liberate the unfree and return home, content that they had defeated killers and saved innocents. One will long remember the sight of Marines in ray-ban glasses, their radios blaring rock music and their tanks emblazoned with slogans like "Anger Management": this really was something new in history, a strange marriage between contemporary American mass culture and 19th-century concepts of heroism, patriotism, and humanitarianism.

IF THESE are some of the factors accounting for our victory, a somewhat different question is what accounted for the Iraqi defeat. After all, the war did not necessarily have to be so quick. Even setting aside the hysterical predictions of disaster and the early cries of "quagmire," we would do well to bear in mind the plenitude of intrinsic advantages on the Iraqi side: ample weapons and munitions, large armies, an array of homeland defenses, trained assassination squads, stealthy political support from other Arab nations, guaranteed sanctuary and supply in Syria, and the presence of newfound allies in Europe who could broker an armistice should the Americans begin to tire or take excessive casualties. Had the highway and the surrounding desert from Kuwait to Baghdad been laced with thousands of land mines, or showered with shells from subterranean artillery, our enormous gamble to send and supply serpentine columns on such a narrow path could have met with near disaster. Perhaps Iraq's greatest edge lay in the inhibitions placed on American military conduct, in contrast to the freedom enjoyed by Saddam Hussein in parking his military assets in schools and mosques and sending out a powerful stream of televised disinformation.

Why then did the Iraqis fold so abruptly? The answer is at least partly generic—that is, having something to do with the Arab way of war in general. In an impressive and underappreciated study, *Arabs at War*, Kenneth M. Pollack has outlined the main problems besetting Middle Eastern armies during the last half-century.* Better known as the author of last year's *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, Pollack here applies the same dispassionate mode of analysis to the wider military culture that has brought defeat after defeat to modern Arab armies.

There is, to begin with, very little status accorded to conscript soldiers, who are poorly paid, housed, and trained. Tribalism, not merit, is more likely to govern the promotion of officers. In an age of mechanized warfare and combined land-and-air operations, most commanders have little knowledge of flexible tactical doctrine. Instead, outdated Soviet ideas from the 1970's—like stacking armor in successive rings for massive, set-piece assaults—still infect the thinking of the few generals who have studied military theory. When such rote practices prove suicidal in the face of a sophisticated opponent with mastery of the air, there is no mechanism for ad-hoc adjustment.

There are other deficiencies as well. Weapons, almost exclusively imported rather than manufactured at home, are often poorly maintained and are thrust into the hands of soldiers lacking either education or much experience with high technology. As American soldiers would remark in the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraqi artillery was inaccurate and slow-firing, small-arms fire was poorly directed, and armored vehicles and tanks were in obviously inferior condition.

All this is symptomatic of larger problems: the absence within Arab militaries of free discussion about operational choices, and a system that rewards obsequiousness and punishes initiative. Only in this wider context can the Baathists' otherwise bewildering tactics in the most recent conflict be understood. Here was a military clique that went to war over the possession of chemical and biological weapons that were so hidden away they could not be readily used for the very purpose for which they had been acquired; that would send an armored column into the open under the cloak of a sandstorm that provided no cloak at all against satellite-guided bombs; that would order men to swarm out of fortifications and dwellings at the sight of approaching American troops ("quail hunters"), only to see them obliterated by waiting planes; that would hurl men clad in pajamas against soldiers arrayed in ceramic body armor; that would stockpile arms and munitions in public sanctuaries that proved indefensible points of resistance.

As Pollack documents, moreover, while defeat on the battlefield can exact a bitter price for a professional Arab soldier, excellence can be no less dangerous, earning him the envy and suspicion of

* Nebraska, 698 pp., $49.95. The subtitle of this book is *Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*.

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his peers and his political bosses. Few of the prominent Iraqi generals who fought in the Iran-Iraq war survived to fight in Kuwait, and almost none was still around for the latest conflict.

It cannot be an accident that Iraq, whose government has been the most nightmarish in the Arab world, has also proved to be the most inept militarily. As long ago as the 1960's, the Iraqis showed themselves to be woefully incompetent in putting down the Kurdish guerrilla forces known as the *pesh merga*. In the Yom Kippur war of 1973, elements of the Iraqi 3rd Armored Division deployed in Syria were nearly annihilated in minutes by far smaller Israeli tank brigades. Saddam Hussein's renewed wars against the Kurds in 1974-75 were just as unsuccessful, as he applied conventional massed Soviet tactics against the ambushes and flank attacks of *pesh merga* irregulars.

Then there was the 1980 surprise invasion of Iran, which turned into a complete fiasco. The sudden, seemingly overwhelming Iraqi assault—with their 2,750 tanks, 1,400 artillery pieces, 340 bombers, and 150,000 combat troops, Saddam's forces enjoyed a five-to-one numerical advantage in most categories—stalled in two months and soon lay under counterattack. Over the ensuing years, the Iraqis staved off utter defeat thanks only to the Iranians' near-total lack of modern arms, the massive importation of both foreign weapons and the capital to sustain an increasingly doomed enterprise, and the use of chemical weapons.

By the time of the August 1990 invasion of tiny Kuwait, the Republican Guard had at least learned from its experience in Iran how to mount more complex air and ground assaults. Even so, however, at the end of the first Gulf war the Iraqi military was only about a day or two away from complete annihilation. Its strategy had rested on the notion that it could ride out an air assault, shoot down with surface-to-air missiles enough planes to confuse coalition forces, and then kill a few thousand Americans to ensure a negotiated armistice. It is a testament to the insular nature of the Baathist military leaders, many of whom spoke little or no English and had rarely been allowed to travel beyond the Middle East, that they truly believed such a strategy of attrition would work: that they could feed and supply tens of thousands of soldiers in the desert for weeks on end, that tanks buried in sand could either avoid being bombed altogether or emerge intact for cohesive assaults, or that an army without satellite intelligence, sophisticated telecommunications and computers, and smart bombs could defeat a modern American military machine.

IF THE insularity of a police state breeds weakness, it can, however, also foster a peculiar kind of ephemeral strength—albeit one whose destructive force is more often turned inward in the guise of terror than outward in the form of real power. In the first Gulf war, a third of a million Iraqi soldiers either surrendered with little fighting or deserted before the shooting started. But the more startling fact may be that at least another quarter-million survived the war and returned home to train their rifles on their own unhappy people. Republican Guardsmen who had romped into Kuwait in the summer of 1990 to loot, rape, and murder, and who in late February 1991 were mauled in a few minutes by the 1st Armored Division at the Medina Ridge, had recouped sufficiently only days later to slaughter mostly unarmed Kurds and Shiites by the tens of thousands. (Twelve years later, some of these same Guardsmen or their younger brothers and cousins would themselves be annihilated in less than two weeks by American airpower, Marines, and the 3rd Mechanized Division.)

This dual tendency—to run before competent enemies and to murder innocents at home—is another reflection of a broader military and indeed societal pathology. As Pollack stresses, Arab societies do not produce indigenous sophisticated weaponry. Indeed, their militaries are almost entirely parasitic on Western or westernized arms industries. The need to import weaponry means that their systems are always a generation behind, and this institutionalized obsolescence inevitably portends defeat when fighting is not intramural but rather cross-cultural, against the societies that design and make such arms in the first place.

It is precisely as a response to this growing asymmetry between conventional Arab militaries and Westernized armies that charismatic killers like Osama bin Laden, Yasir Arafat, and Saddam Hussein have turned to unconventional remedies, by which they hope to redress the odds. In the days when the Arabs could count on the support of the Soviet Union, this function was performed by imported Soviet weapons like anti-tank rockets, SAM missiles, plastic explosives, and land mines—all of which were intended less to achieve military parity or enhance conventional offensive operations than simply to kill and maim enough better-armed opponents to convince the rest to back off. After the loss of Soviet subsidies and the gradual disappearance of first-rate non-American and European weaponry, the same end was thought to be achievable by the additional means of surprise attacks, blackmail, bombings, assassination, stepped-

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up terrorism, and other methods of intimidation.

Until recently, it seems to have been widely believed in the Arab world that the superior technology of the West could, in fact, be nullified by just such threats of random and horrific violence, perpetrated by goose-stepping death squads or masked, pajama-clad bombers. And the breakneck effort to craft weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, and nuclear, must also be seen largely in this context—i.e., the desire to find a surrogate capability, particularly after the loss of the Soviet Union's nuclear deterrent, that might restore to Arab regimes the perceived power to stave off utter defeat in a conventional war against Israel or the West.

In their choice of military tactics, Arab dictators and Arab terrorists are, indeed, birds of a feather. Baathists who in the recent conflict ran from the 3rd Mechanized Division and suddenly reconstituted themselves as gun-toting civilians in the streets of Mosul and Tikrit resemble the West Bank Palestinian martyrs' brigades who in daytime pose as nationalist protestors and at night become masked assassins. The Saddam *fedayeen* who bushwhacked American columns were pale imitations of Hamas and Hizbullah. It was no accident that suicide bombers and Arab "martyrs" showed up in the penultimate stages of the war in hopes of murdering Americans at check points and on patrols. Nor is it a surprise that Abu Nidal and Abu Abbas, the Palestinian murderer-terrorists, should have felt so at home for so long in Baghdad.

What is it that permits this radically dysfunctional system to perpetuate itself? The question is really political rather than military, and ultimately the answer is a state-induced terror that has its roots in the absence of consensual government and of notions of personal freedom, thus ensuring little self-criticism or accountability in matters of war-making or anything else. Helping to keep this entire edifice afloat is an ingrained (but also state-supported) habit of denial: a disavowal of just how deep, and how self-inflicted, are the deficiencies of one's own society; a rejection of every alternative view of reality that would expose these inadequacies for what they are; an unwillingness to assume any responsibility for repairing them.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, American viewers were exasperated or convulsed at the circus-like spectacle provided by Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, the so-called Baathist information minister—a/k/a "Baghdad Bob"—whose daily communiqués detailed an endless string of catastrophes for coalition forces. Seeming at first odious, then deranged, at last almost entertaining, al-Sahaf confidently declaimed lines like "We have killed most of the infidels, and I think we will finish the rest soon" even as split-screen television images revealed Abrams tanks looming a few miles away, or Marines resting in Saddam's Baghdad palaces.

A joke, but too bitter to be mere jest. Such state-sponsored whoppers, spread from Ramallah to Cairo and beyond, are hardly a new phenomenon. In June 1967, as Michael Oren reminds us in *Six Days of War*, there were triumphant broadcasts about heroic Arab armies approaching the outskirts of Tel Aviv and Egyptian jets pounding Israel even as Israeli soldiers were sweeping to victory on three fronts and Egyptian air fields were littered with the remains of that country's air force, destroyed in the first minutes of war. Such fabrications are among the intellectual legacies of the Arab regimes of the Middle East, whose homegrown proclivities toward mythmaking and braggadocio were only enhanced by decades of immersion in a Soviet-style disinformation apparatus.

Nor have international news organizations, who supposedly know better, been so immune to these ruinous exercises in falsification as the skeptical treatment of "Baghdad Bob" might suggest. Quite the contrary. Especially when baseless bragging takes the form of protestations about unprecedented Arab suffering and victimization—and even if presented without quite the dramatic flair of the Iraqi information minister—the press has proved all too ready to lend its credibility-enhancing energies to the Arab cause.

The hysteria and lies that surrounded the battle of "Jeningrad" in the spring of 2002 are a prime example of the process—and very instructive in the present context. The occasion was Israel's incursion into the armed "refugee" camp in the West Bank town of Jenin after scores of Israelis had been killed in Arab suicide bombings over the previous weeks. Relying on tactics designed to minimize civilian casualties, Israeli forces suffered 23 dead while killing between 46 and 52 Palestinians, mostly fighters, in days of fierce house-to-house combat. Immediately there was talk of "genocide," of "thousands" of Palestinian dead, of a "siege" rivaling that of Leningrad in World War II. The purportedly judicious and sober Palestinian spokesman Saeb Erekat offered up an estimate of 3,000 dead; he subsequently adjusted this to 500, a figure that, although no less mendacious, was treated with solemn respect, as if to come down from so grand an initial falsehood were a moral triumph in itself.

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Indeed, rather than providing Saeb Erekat with his own "Baghdad Bob"-like web page, where his untruths could have been held up to deserved scorn, the Western media, led in this case by the British, canonized them. On April 17, 2002, the *Guardian* called the supposed massacre at Jenin "every bit as repellent as Osama bin Laden's attack on New York." The *Evening Standard* trumpeted the term "genocide," and its columnist A.N. Wilson further accused Israel of "poisoning the water supply" to ensure its "cover of genocide." Not to be outdone, the London *Times*'s Janine di Giovanni snapped that not even Bosnia or Chechnya rivaled "such deliberate destruction, such disrespect for human life."*

From this perspective, the Arab inebriation with falsehood and the propaganda of the lie begins to look not so irrational after all. However injurious such habits of delusion may turn out to be when tested in actual clashes of arms, politically they have proved, at least until now, rather useful—and quite in step with the deductive predispositions of influential sectors of opinion in the West. This is especially so where the subject of Israel and the Palestinians is concerned, but it applies elsewhere as well. European efforts over the years to sell arms to Saddam Hussein's regime, machinations to hamper American military action, and the postwar European support for Syria to resist the extradition of Iraqi Baathists—these are some of the fruits of a tacit acquiescence in the idea of Arab victimhood. So are the large percentages of Frenchmen and other Europeans favoring Palestinian terror over Israeli democracy. Whatever the particular motive involved, it has been generally the case that Arab adversaries of Israel or of the United States have been able to win politically and diplomatically what they have been unable to achieve through arms on the battlefield.

THE REAL question remains whether, in the wake of Iraq, any of the normal ways of doing business are going to change. As far as the United States is concerned, one might hope that our face-to-face confrontation with and utter defeat of the Baathists—coupled with the evidence of their barbaric rule, documentation of which keeps turning up as we sift through abandoned Iraqi government offices and torture chambers—will lead to a renewed appreciation of what Israel has been up against in its own struggle with an enemy that adopts similar strategies and displays a similar mentality. If nothing else, the trouncing, removal, and humiliation of Saddam Hussein should remind us that wars of self-defense and national survival need to be pursued to their logical conclusions in military defeat of the aggressors and change of regime. Rarely if ever do interrupted conflicts end by means of imposed peace processes, road maps, or UN-brokered armistices—all of which perpetuate and reward the illusion that defeated aggressors can recoup politically what they lost militarily—but rather by the elimination and replacement of the conditions that prompted the conflicts in the first place.

Certainly the geopolitical calculus in the Middle East has visibly improved, including for Israel. We have 100,000 soldiers positioned on the border with Iran—a country now surrounded by reform governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, and one whose restive population is itself reportedly eager for liberalization. Already the United States has turned renewed attention toward the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and the sanctuaries enjoyed by the terrorist cadres of Hamas and Hizbullah; Syria itself may soon be confronted with democracies to the north, south, and east. There are thus grounds for thinking that, combined with other initiatives, our efforts in Iraq might end by so changing realities in the Middle East as to bring about the emergence of more than one new consensual government in the region.

Lending support to the possibility of political progress is the fact that, even before we landed in Iraq, some Arabs seemed at last to be acknowledging that their problems were self-induced—and that these liabilities have been threatening the very survival of their societies. The unusually candid *Arab Human Development Report 2002*, issued by leading Arab intellectuals under the auspices of the UN, was one such symptom. Among the particulars listed in its damning indictment (framed, needless to say, by a ritual denunciation of Israel) are the struggle between the area's exploding population—75 percent under the age of eighteen—and its ever scarcer resources; the abysmal economic performance of the 22 undemocratic Arab countries, whose *combined* gross natural product of $531 billion dollars amounts to $60 billion less than Spain's alone; the rapacity of the Saudi royal family, which has sequestered $450 billion outside the country, a figure representing not much less than all the goods and services produced by 300 million Arabs each year; and the expressed desire of perhaps half the youth in most Arab countries to emigrate, most often to either Europe or the United States.

The problems of the Middle East are gargantuan,

* For further documentation of this episode, see "Jeningrad: What the British Media Said" by Tom Gross (*National Review Online*, May 13, 2002).

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but we have at last taken a lever to this part of the world and given it a shove in the right direction. Still, there are at least two reasons for caution. First, Americans have traditionally been disinclined to seek further confrontations in the wake of victory—or, for that matter, in the wake of defeat. Our material and psychic exhaustion in 1945 meant that we had no stomach for the messy effort to ensure the cause of freedom in Eastern Europe—the very cause that had attended the start of World War II—against our former ally the Soviet Union. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, Americans simply walked away from the unfolding genocide in Cambodia. Victory in the first Gulf war precluded any desire for the further bother of actually removing Saddam Hussein—even though thousands upon thousands of Shiites and Kurds were butchered while American soldiers were ordered to stand down. How probable, or perhaps even prudent, is it that an American President will resort to military action against, say, Syria so quickly after the recent war—even if high-ranking Baathists and Iraqi weapons are found ensconced in Damascus? As for the American public, it may be more inclined to turn away in disgust from scenes of free Iraqis angrily demonstrating against their liberators, or from the inevitably messy and protracted business of reconstruction, than to clamor for more of the same in Syria.

ANOTHER CONSIDERATION has to do specifically with Israel. Although our intervention in Iraq neatly gave the lie to the conventional wisdom that the Israel-Arab dispute is at the "heart" of the Middle East problem, it is habitual by now for any American success in the region to be followed by efforts at resolving that dispute. Pressuring Israel to "take risks for peace" has long been seen by our State Department as a means of assuaging Arab humiliation after military defeat—almost as if the amazing military prowess of Western armies required some kind of psychological compensation in the form of political concessions. Thus, in the aftermath of the first Gulf war, the rapid convening of the Madrid conference set the stage for the disastrous Oslo accords—and hence the current "road map."

But the Palestinians have their own Saddam Husseins, and their own kindred thugocracy—and their own murderous delusions. From all of these material and ideological shackles they need to be liberated before there can be a glimpse of a beginning of concord between them and the Israelis. That difficult truth, too, is a lesson of the recent war, no less than is the gleaming hope borne aloft by the downfall of one especially brutal tyranny through the brilliance of American arms and the perseverance of American vision.

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The New Gloomsayers

Joshua Muravchik

THE BEARERS of bad news are back. The headlines may tell of American military victories overseas, but everywhere warnings are proliferating of troubles ahead. Most of the forecasts concern the allegedly dire consequences of the victories themselves: chaos or worse in Iraq, permanent disaffection in Europe, mounting enmity elsewhere. But a spate of new books point to deeper structural dangers—dangers that are said to be lurking beneath the surface of our global preeminence and that are mostly of our own making. Taken together, these works constitute the largest chorus of foreboding since the appearance fifteen years ago of the prophets of American decline.

The declinists, to use the label given to them by the political scientist Samuel Huntington, aimed "to shake Reagan's America from a decade of rose-colored . . . torpor," in the approving phrase of the *New York Times*. Their thesis was that "imperial overstretch," a term coined by the historian Paul Kennedy, was causing the U.S. to spend too much on defense, thus sending the nation into an economic downturn that would eviscerate the very basis of its strength. A similar theme could be heard among the heralds of a new era of Japanese supremacy, brought about by the readiness of Japan's government to intervene in the marketplace. "Japan has, as I predicted it would, become the undisputed world economic champion," boasted the economist Clyde Prestowitz in 1989. William Pfaff, a columnist for the *International Herald Tribune*, chimed in that America's relationship with Japan had taken on a "colonial quality"—with America in the role of colony.

The forecasts of American decline or Japanese ascendance did not stand the test of even a very brief amount of time. Soon, the Soviet empire collapsed, followed by the Soviet Union itself, all owing, in no small measure, to Ronald Reagan's military expenditures and his "overstretched" foreign policy—that is, to the very things that the declinists had decried. Japan, meanwhile, fell into an economic tailspin from which it still, after more than a decade, shows few signs of escaping, while the U.S. economy grew enough to boost per-capita income by more than 25 percent, widening the margin by which our prosperity outstrips that of the other industrialized countries. And just as America's political-military success came from spurning the counsel of the declinists, so its economic success flowed from ignoring those who propounded the Japanese model. The lighter hand of government in America's version of capitalism allowed our firms to adapt more readily than their Japanese or European counterparts to globalization and the revolution in information technology.

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Unprecedented triumphs of U.S. policy and industry have unfolded during the fifteen years since America ignored the summons to emerge from its "rose-colored torpor" and face up to a supposedly grimmer national reality. To boot, these years have also witnessed the triumph of American ideas all around the world. According to the authoritative tally of Freedom House, some 63 percent of the world's countries are now governed as electoral democracies, and a virtual global consensus has been reached on the validity of market economics as opposed to state planning.

Of course, new challenges have arisen, notably from terrorism and radical Islam, but these in turn have brought into view other facets of America's strength. Since September 11, 2001, the U.S. has scored two decisive military victories, each exceeding all forecasts of success and making mockery of the plentiful warnings of fiasco. They have served to demonstrate the extraordinary prowess and agility of American arms while also dispelling the notion that the country has grown too soft to tolerate casualties in war.

Abroad, this astounding run of success has generated a discernible uptick in expressions of envy. At home, one reaction has been a revival of premonitory scenarios of gloom. Just as the declinists of the late 1980's took aim at the spirit of national self-confidence that had been engendered by President Reagan's upbeat rhetoric and the success of his economic and foreign policies, so today's Cassandras seek to rouse the public from the complacency of America's present vaunting status. They take aim at the very things—military mastery, the spread of democracy and markets—that others interpret as signs of American triumph. Will their warnings prove better founded than those of Kennedy, Prestowitz, and Pfaff?

Three of the most noteworthy entries in the new literature of foreboding are Andrew J. Bacevich's *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*,* Amy Chua's *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*,† and Fareed Zakaria's *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*.** Zakaria is a man of the Center-Right, Chua a woman of the Left, and Bacevich seems to have migrated to that odd corner where Right and Left meet. While their books are quite distinct in their lines of analysis, what they share is the conviction that current U.S. global policies are harmful to the world and dangerous to the United States itself.

Bacevich, a retired U.S. military officer who is now a professor of international relations at Boston University and a prolific writer on military issues, sets out to explain the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as a form of "resistance" to America's imperial pretensions. At least since World War II, he writes, Washington has pursued "a well-defined grand strategy." Except for rare lapses into candor, the true face of this strategy has been masked by leaders who "profess to believe" in "peace and development, democracy and human rights" but whose real purpose has been "to preserve and, where both feasible and conducive to U.S. interests, to expand an American imperium." From one administration to the next, U.S. policies have reflected "a single-minded determination to extend and perpetuate American political, economic, and cultural hegemony . . . on a global scale."

Of the various forms of American "hegemony," it is the economic that for Bacevich takes pride of place. Acknowledging an intellectual debt to the leftist historians William Appleman Williams and James Beard, he argues that "economic expansion abroad, best achieved by opening the world to trade and foreign investment, [is] a precondition of America's own well-being and therefore the centerpiece of U.S. strategy." And here is the root of present-day conflict: "Although Americans take it as a given that the United States should benefit disproportionately from the spoils, . . . to others the logic of this arrangement is not self-evident." Some, like Pope John Paul II, express their demurral in moral terms. Others, like Osama bin Laden, resort to less conscionable methods.

But the last laugh, according to Bacevich, is on bin Laden. In the end, he succeeded only in handing American leaders, and in particular George W. Bush, the excuse they had been seeking to justify their continued projection of power:

> In calling for war not just against al Qaeda but against terror everywhere, Bush succeeded in articulating something that had eluded policymakers since the collapse of the Soviet Union deprived the United States of a readily identifiable enemy: a compelling rationale for a sustained and proactive use of American power on a global scale as a necessary protective measure.

And so, with bin Laden as unwitting catalyst, "America today is Rome, committed irreversibly to the maintenance and, where feasible, expansion of an empire."

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* Harvard, 320 pp., $29.95.

† Doubleday, 256 pp., $26.00.

** Norton, 256 pp., $24.95.

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Chua, a professor of law at Yale, takes a somewhat less jaundiced view of our motives but a more dire one of our impact on the world. Unlike Bacevich, she does not seem to doubt that we are sincere and well-intentioned in wanting to spread democracy and market economics. Nor does she even deny that these are valid objectives for the long term. But she believes Washington is pushing them too hard too soon, with the result that "the global spread of markets and democracy is a principal, aggravating cause of group hatred and ethnic violence throughout the non-Western world."

For example, according to Chua, "markets and democracy were among the causes of both the Rwandan and Yugoslavian genocides." She also blames them for the gruesome civil war in Sierra Leone, anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, potential disaster in Burma, upheaval in Zimbabwe, the revival of anti-Semitism in the former USSR, and, looking back, Hitler's persecution of the Jews. The same dynamic can be observed on a supranational basis. Underlying the Israel-Arab conflict is the Jewish state's position as a market-dominant minority in the Middle East region, while, on a global scale, America plays the role of market-dominant minority to a majority that is "hungry, poor, exploited, and powerless."

Although Chua hastens to concede that the condition of this majority "is not *all* America's fault" (emphasis added), it is nevertheless imperative in her view that we "devise measures and create institutions restraining the worst excesses of markets and democracy." She suggests, for example, both affirmative action and slowing the pace of democratization. And she urges the market-dominant minorities to be conspicuously charitable.

Which brings us to Zakaria, a well-known commentator who was formerly the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs* and is now the editor of *Newsweek International*. Although Zakaria shares few of Chua's reservations about promoting capitalism, his indictment of democracy is more far-reaching. In addition to opposing efforts to spread democracy abroad, he voices deep misgivings about its effects at home. "Democracy has its dark side," he warns. The liberal democracy of the advanced Western countries combines popular rule with personal freedoms, but liberty is not synonymous with democracy, and in fact there is a tension between the two. Although many countries are turning to elections to choose their governments, "democracy is flourishing; liberty is not."

Democracy may even lead to or heighten illiberalism. Yugoslavia and Indonesia "were far more tolerant and secular when they were ruled by strongmen" than after they democratized, Zakaria argues. "The Beijing regime is less populist, nationalist, aggressive, and intolerant than its people." And free votes in Muslim countries might bring radical Islamists to power.

In the West, observes Zakaria, "capitalism and rule of law [came] first, and then democracy." This is the ideal pattern, and one that was followed successfully in recent times by the likes of Taiwan and South Korea. But elsewhere, the rush to elected government has had a harmful effect. As examples, Zakaria offers both his native India and Africa. "Although democracy has in many ways opened up African politics and brought people liberty, it has also produced a degree of chaos and instability that has actually made corruption and lawlessness worse in many countries." "What Africa needs more than democracy," Zakaria asserts, "is good governance."

But the problem is not just with countries unripe for democracy; it is with democracy itself. Thus, according to Zakaria, the United States, the oldest democracy and most developed of nations, is also at risk. There is, he writes, "a deep imbalance in the American system." The professional elites that once "guided democracy"—lawyers, doctors, accountants, bankers—are no longer respected. They have been replaced by "the poll," to which our supposed leaders pay craven obeisance.

Hand in glove with this trend is a general cheapening of cultural standards. Although Zakaria approves of capitalism, he laments the fact that "marketization has become the shadow partner of democratization." Fundamentalist Christianity produces its own rock music; the Book-of-the-Month club, which once offered quality literature, now serves as an outlet for lowbrow potboilers; and TV fare is a race to the bottom. Zakaria does point to one happy exception in this avalanche of mediocrity: "*Newsweek*, where I work." But unless more of our elite can rise to *Newsweek*'s standard, rampant democracy will continue to pose a peril to our country and the world. Inverting Woodrow Wilson's call to make the world safe for democracy, Zakaria concludes that today "our task is to make democracy safe for the world."

ALL THREE of these authors write clear, readable prose, although only Zakaria's is leavened with a touch of wry humor. Chua's book is the most seamless, remaining as relentlessly "on message" as a disciplined electoral candidate. She also

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has the virtue of acknowledging arguments contrary to her own, even if, rather than effectively rebutting them, she tends just to dismiss them by restating her thesis. The two halves of Zakaria's book, one about international politics, the other about the U.S., fit together less easily, while Bacevich allows himself a number of detours to his main thesis, including a telling critique of General Wesley Clark's conduct of the Kosovo war.

Despite the diversity of theme and approach, all three echo the warnings of "imperial overstretch" sounded by the declinists of yore; indeed, Chua's publisher explicitly likens her book to Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. To be sure, the danger they proclaim is not one of actual decline, at least not in the near term—a hard case to make in this moment of American preeminence. Rather, it is that the exertion of American power and influence will backfire, causing harm rather than good in the world, ultimately warping our own moral fiber and corroding our way of life.

Is this argument, in any of its variations, persuasive?

Bacevich's central conceit, the key that he believes unlocks the mysteries of all U.S. policy, is "openness"—"the removal of barriers to the movement of goods, capital, people, and ideas." It is maddeningly inexact. Yes, the U.S. favors free trade (except in steel), free travel (except to Cuba), free expression (except for bin Laden on TV). But *is* this the essence of American objectives? Is it more important than security? And is it, as Bacevich proposes, synonymous with a relentless pursuit of national aggrandizement driven by material greed?

Like any argument about motives, this one can ultimately be neither proved nor refuted. But Bacevich's interpretation is highly implausible. In attempting to rehabilitate Williams, who blamed the cold war on American imperialism, and Beard, who said much the same about our part in World War II, Bacevich concedes that these men underestimated the real dangers posed by Stalin and Hitler. Nonetheless, he believes that they correctly understood America's motives. But if our goals were self-aggrandizing, why did we wait until after Pearl Harbor in the one case and after the fall of Eastern Europe in the other to get into the fray?

An analogous question presents itself with regard to Bacevich's own claims that the U.S. "exaggerat[ed] the plight of Kosovar Albanians to create a pretext for launching a war against Yugoslavia." How does this square with events from 1991 through 1995 when "Yugoslavia" wreaked havoc on Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, and, despite many cries for intervention, Washington refused to become involved? And when we did bomb the Serbs on behalf of Kosovo, is it true that "the essence of that strategy was business and American political clout"? What "business" have Americans done in Kosovo or anywhere in the former Yugoslavia that would offset the dollar costs of our intervention?

Similarly with the war against terrorism, another supposed pretext for imperial ambition. Middle Eastern terrorists have been killing Americans for some 30 years. If it was pretext we wanted, why did we not seize on the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 or of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie in 1988 or of the World Trade Center in 1993? And why, if they were on a quest for empire, did the present President Bush and Bill Clinton before him each seem so uninterested in foreign policy until driven by events to confront it?

Bacevich would have us believe that what Americans saw in the events of September 11, 2001 was more an opportunity to augment their profits and consumption than a threat to their lives and country. This is of a piece with his claim that Washington demonized Saddam Hussein in order to have "a rationale for stationing U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf." Referring to the transfer of the presidency from Bill Clinton to George Bush, Bacevich scoffs: "If a new, tougher U.S. policy was in the offing, the Iraqi dictator . . . provid[ed] a convenient pretext. . . . But," he then adds, "it soon became clear that there would be no new policy." Four months after the appearance of this book, President Bush launched the Iraq campaign with a bombardment aimed at "decapitating" Saddam Hussein's regime. Whether or not the strike killed Saddam, it blew a big hole in Bacevich's interpretation of reality.

Like Bacevich, Chua attaches too much importance to economic motives. That wealthy ethnic groups have sometimes become targets of attack is true, and she illustrates and explores the phenomenon thoroughly. But she freights this dynamic with more explanatory burden than it can carry. The abuse of Croats by Serbs in 1991 had far more to do with the memories of Croat abuse of Serbs during World War II than with any economic grievance, and similar points can be made about the other vectors of conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

Chua's other cases are shakier still. Germany's Jews may have been relatively prosperous, but the principal targets of Nazi genocide were the impoverished Jews of the Soviet Union and Poland—not

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to mention the fact that the complexity and grandiosity of the Nazi war against the Jews (to use the late Lucy Dawidowicz's apt term) make nonsense of any effort to reduce it to a single, economic motive. Describing Israel as a market-dominant minority in the Middle East is no less weird: since the Arabs mostly refuse to engage in commerce with the Jewish state, one wonders what market Chua has in mind; and if all she means is that Arabs are jealous of Israel's prosperity, then wealthy Saudi Arabia should be less hostile to Israel than impoverished Jordan—but the reverse is the case.

Chua concedes that some groups do not appear to behave in accord with the economic determinism she propounds. Thus, "many market-dominant minorities—the Chinese in Malaysia, for example, or Jews in Russia, and Americans everywhere—often seem to be among the most vocal advocates of democracy." But, she says, it is not democracy these groups want but something quite different. If that is so, and if Americans do not mean to promote democracy abroad, why did she write this book warning them to stop doing it?

Finally, if ethnic violence really does flow essentially from economic disadvantage, Chua's solution—slowing growth—makes little sense. Perhaps, as she claims, rapid growth contains risks, but prolonging impoverishment also contains risks. Who is to say which are the greater? This cul de sac may explain her lame closing sentence: "It is difficult to see . . . how a little generosity and humility [on the part of market-dominant minorities] could possibly hurt." As a conclusion to a purportedly serious analysis of genocide, this is mere homiletics.

OF THE three books, Zakaria's has received the most attention, thanks no doubt to the fact that his anti-democracy thesis is so daring and that his own reputation is the most substantial. (The jacket of *The Future of Freedom* is graced with endorsements from Henry Kissinger, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Samuel Huntington, among others.) Nonetheless, he is guilty of errors, both small and large, that cast large doubt on his overall thesis.

Sometimes these errors are matters of logic, and sometimes of fact. Zakaria's claim that Indonesia under Suharto was a tolerant place is true only if one omits the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Chinese in the racial bloodbath that accompanied Suharto's seizure of power. If we are to celebrate the reign of "secularism" in Tito's Yugoslavia, should we not welcome the suppression of religion by other Communist dictators? In America, we read in *The Future of Freedom*, "Jim Crow was destroyed . . . not by democracy but despite it," as if the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 were promulgated by decree. Elsewhere, Zakaria asserts without evidence that observance of human rights in Latin America has declined over the last ten years, but Freedom House's annual assessments show just the opposite. To document how democratic elections can lead to perverted ends, he writes that "in the famous election of 1933 the Nazis received 44 percent of the vote . . . and [were] asked to form the government"—but the election he refers to was held two months *after* Hitler had become Chancellor and ruthlessly employed the police powers of the government in concert with the depredations of his storm troopers to cripple the campaigns of his rivals.

The largest error in the book, however, is Zakaria's central premise: namely, that liberty is not flourishing around the world. In its annual survey, Freedom House counts the number of "electoral democracies," meaning countries where the government is chosen in a genuine, contested vote; it also measures each country separately on a scale of "freedom" that takes into account not only elections but also the gamut of civil liberties, the rule of law, and other tokens of what Zakaria means when he says "liberty." According to this research, democracy has grown—and freedom has, too.

Thus, in 1973, what Freedom House calls "not-free" countries outnumbered "free" countries 69 to 43, or by a ratio of roughly 3 to 2. (There were also 38 in-between countries, labeled "partly free.") Today, the balance has nearly reversed: free countries outnumber the not-free by 89 to 48, or nearly 2 to 1. If one tallies by combined population rather than by countries, one reaches the same result, although less dramatically since China weighs heavily on the "not-free" side of the scale and because poorer countries tend to have both less freedom and faster-growing populations. Nonetheless, whether you count countries or people, freedom reached an all-time high in 2002.

There is this kernel of truth in Zakaria's observation: democracy has spread so far and so fast that the number of newly hatched democracies is far greater than ever before. As one would expect, the political institutions associated with a mature democracy—a fully free press, an independent judiciary, a professionally ethical civil service—are as yet imperfectly formed. This is what provides grist for Zakaria's mill. But for such states, as Leon Aron

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has well noted, it would be more accurate to use the label "preliberal democracy" than Zakaria's "illiberal democracy." In short, the underlying trend that he badly misconstrues is not a blight of liberty but rather its unprecedentedly rapid expansion, which inevitably has entailed uneven progress and even some disasters.

If Zakaria's diagnosis is off-base, his remedy is incomprehensible. Take his Olympian declaration that Africa does not need democracy so much as "good governance." Arguably so; but how does Zakaria propose to provide it? In reality, Africa has experienced lots of nondemocracy and rarely if ever has this nondemocracy afforded good governance. Stacking up the records of the continent's too few democratic regimes against those of its often brutal dictators leaves little doubt that democracy is the more likely path to the many things that Africa needs.

As for the U.S., Zakaria has a more specific remedy for its problem of excessive democracy. He proposes placing more governmental authority in bodies that are not beholden to the electorate. The models he points to are the European Commission, the World Trade Organization, the Federal Reserve Board, and the Supreme Court. Specifically, he urges our country to take the power of taxation from Congress and vest it instead in an unelected "independent federal tax authority." This at least rings a bell, but have not Americans already once tried taxation without representation and found it wanting?

In the end, Zakaria's entire treatment of the United States tends to contradict the rest of his book. Looking beyond our shores, he does not declare himself deeply skeptical of democracy. Rather, he focuses on the sequencing: we should, he writes, seek capitalism and constitutional liberalism first and only then democracy, just as happened in the West. But if America's own system is as dysfunctional as Zakaria suggests, why follow our particular trajectory? Why aim for democracy at all?

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Charles Krauthammer remarked that we had arrived at the "unipolar moment." That moment is not without its perils, some of which, although perhaps not so ultimate as those we faced from the USSR, are quite terrifying enough. But the same moment has offered opportunities to make the world safer and better, not least for ourselves—including the opportunity to influence how long the moment itself will last.

In the world of today, there is no more important question than how America will use its unprecedented power. That it can be a great force for good is already well proved. Under the influence of U.S. policies, the world economy has grown robustly since World War II, including in more recent decades in most of the poorer countries. This has also been a time of relative peace and, over the last three decades, of an unprecedented expansion of human freedom. These are the fruits of democracy, market economics, and American power—all the things that our current gloomsayers decry. That each of these benefits has some lamentable side-effects goes without saying: that is the way human progress works. But to magnify the negatives so that they appear larger than the main trend is to peer through a very distorting lens.

Today, with no superpower enemy, American engagement with the world remains hard to predict. Americans are always prey to the temptations of isolationism. And the anti-Americanism being voiced in so many foreign quarters—an understandable reaction, no doubt, to our preeminence—may drive more Americans to wipe their hands of the burdens of what Bacevich mischievously calls "empire." (We have nary a territorial possession.) This would imperil the world's prosperity, freedom, and above all its peace. Had we heeded the declinists of the 1980's, we might not have won the cold war. If today we heed the advice of those offering tendentious and pejorative interpretations of our effect on the world, the results could be no less calamitous.

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Countrymen
A Story
David Aizman

For the first week, Varvara Stepanovna Klobukova felt simply splendid in her new surroundings. Above all, she was tickled by the knowledge that a miracle had occurred and she was abroad, in France. Making her no less happy was the thought of her salary: 700 francs a month, plus room and board—more than she would have earned in a year at home in Mertvovodsk. Finally, there was pleasure to be had from living in luxury and comfort of a kind she had never known.

Varvara Stepanovna had been given two wonderful rooms and a *cabinet de toilette* with a bath, a shower, and a very large three-section mirror in which one could admire oneself from every angle. The furniture was all truly "royal," and most astonishing of all was the bed, an edifice with carved rosewood columns, silk covers, and lace curtains. Her chambermaid was a thousand times more elegant that that "faker" Oberemchenko—Mertvovodsk's first social lioness—and at dinner a stately servant in stockings and white gloves served her innumerable dishes of the most refined quality.

Varvara Stepanovna had gotten her job in the following way. Count de Saint-Blin was a rich and enterprising French industrialist who owned shares in a number of Russian factories and visited Russia several times a year. His wife, a heavy, rotund woman, famous in her youth for parties and wild sprees, usually stayed home, either in Paris or at their castle in the provinces, giving herself over to pious exercises such as knitting jerseys for the poor or subjecting herself to treatments for illnesses she did not have. But it happened once that the countess got the idea of touring her Russian properties, and off she went. Naturally she was accompanied by a staff: chambermaids, servants, coachmen, and a secretary for her philanthropic activities as well as two lady's companions and a Swedish masseuse, Mlle. Norcelius.

The countess spent two weeks in the Ekaterinoslav province and a month in the Kherson province, visited St. Petersburg, and stopped for a while in Moscow before, excited and enchanted by everything she had seen, in particular our people—"*ils sont si soumis, les russes*"—she started making arrangements to return home.

David Aizman (1869-1922) *was born in Ukraine but lived most of his adult life as a wanderer, leaving Russia in 1896 to study painting in Paris and later spending four years in the French countryside, where he gained his voice as a Jewish-Russian writer and where the present story is set. In the 1900's and 1910's, his stories and novellas appeared regularly in the leading Russian periodicals; an eight-volume edition of his works was released from 1911 to 1919. As unknown today as he was famous then, Aizman was characterized by the writer Aleksandr Amfiteatrov in 1908 as, "after Dostoevsky, . . . a verbal artist who knows how to strike the heart with unprecedented force." "Countrymen" ("*Zemliaki"), *originally published in Russian in 1903, appears here in English for the first time, in a slightly abridged form. The translation is by* Maxim D. Shrayer, *a professor of Russian and English at Boston College. The story will be included in Mr. Shrayer's forthcoming two-volume* Anthology of Jewish-Russian Literature *(2004).*

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All of a sudden, the Swedish masseuse announced she was staying. In Mertvovodsk she had met a compatriot who owned a fish store, and she was marrying him. So shaken was the countess by the girl's untoward behavior that for a whole week she could not knit a single charitable jersey. But somehow she managed to calm down and initiated a search for a replacement. Varvara Stepanovna had been chosen.

The countess immediately took a strong liking to her. First of all, she was pliant—*soumise*—and second of all she excelled in her work. Or at least so the countess said; indeed, she declared, never had anyone given her so good a massage as this *petite russe*. When the moment came to pack for home, she found she could not let go of Varvara Stepanovna, not for anything in the world; trebling her salary, she took her back to her castle.

VARVARA STEPANOVNA'S duties occupied her for exactly one hour each day, from nine to ten in the morning. The rest of her time was hers to dispose of as she would. But how to spend it, she did not know. She had carried from home a few issues of *Virgin Soil* magazine and a volume of Vonliarskii's writings, and though she was no lover of books, she now spent long hours reading. But that could hardly fill up an entire day, and when the writings had been read, Klobukova quickly became bored.

She strolled in the park, vast and strikingly beautiful; she took long walks to neighboring villages; she spent hours feeding the swans in the village pond and the rabbits in their sheds. All the while, she never ceased being bored. She could more or less understand French—she had studied it back home at her *progymnasium*, where her education had safely ended—but she spoke it very badly. Still, when she had to, she was capable of expressing herself and making some sort of conversation, and the countess had made her solemnly swear not to engage with any of the castle's staff. "Mlle. Norcelius used to chat with everyone," the countess complained. "She was a socialist, and I'm very happy she's finally gone. You, I hope, are not a socialist?"

Klobukova reassured the countess. Her father, she said, was a retired captain and prison warden, her brother a police officer, and she herself professed quite moderate beliefs.

"*Je vous en félicite*," the countess responded, adding that in November her grandchildren with two governesses would be arriving and then Klobukova would have people to talk to, for they would all have breakfast and lunch together. But in the meantime, Varvara Stepanovna had to sit alone, and she was unbearably lonely. Nor did she find palatable the *suprême de volaille à l'Elysée* or the aromatic fine wines she was served. She longed for the sweet taste of cabbage, for dried salty fish. At home in Mertvovodsk, she had known how to fill her day—visiting clients, doing things around the house, mending, embroidering—and was never bored. On summer evenings she would walk to the main boulevard where officers and post-office clerks courted her, in winter she would go skating or visit friends or attend balls at the club.

Never before had she been away from her hometown or her family. Now she languished in the grip of sadness. The alien French faces, so different from the Russian type; the quick, nasal speech, which made it hard to discern what was being said; the cheery beauty of the landscape; the strangeness of the peasants' garb—"The devil knows them, why do they need wooden shoes?" Day after day, she grew more sullen and grim. She lost weight and became pale. She even wept a few times.

"I'm such a fool," she would say, trying to stop herself: "a twenty-two-year-old crying like a school girl." But admonitions did not help. Tears streamed down her face as she climbed into her huge rosewood bed a little after nine in the evening, thinking angrily and bitterly how lousy her life was. For the sake of a few hundred francs she had left her native land and all of her loved and dear ones, parted with all her old habits and customs, gone God knows where to live with God knows whom, sold herself into servitude. In her dreams, when she finally fell asleep, she saw Mertvovodsk—the market square littered with horse manure; a soldier standing in the watch tower; pigs strolling on the boulevard; the tipsy sexton, Lavrentii; the firm, oak-brown legs of Gorpyna the dishwasher; and other people, vistas, and objects close to her heart. If, of a nighttime, Russia or things Russian failed to fill her dreams, she would arise in the morning more subdued and somber than ever.

All around her lay objects more beautiful, more graceful, more fanciful, more costly, and more pleasurable than any in Russia, and still they elicited only vexation, ennui, and longing. "When the governesses come I'll feel better, happier," she tried to console herself. But she knew that the governesses could not help her condition, and that the longer she stayed, the more acute and unbearable her yearnings would become. Every day she wrote lengthy letters—even to people she wasn't close to—counting the days ahead and marking down when she should expect a reply. "Leave everything,

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run away!" would sometimes flash in her head. But then she would immediately recall her family's dire finances, soon to worsen when her brother Vasia went to university, and her parents' little old house, mortgaged and remortgaged and upon the very point of foreclosure. And, gathering all her strength and courage, Varvara Stepanovna would chase away the thought of escaping and go on bearing her cross.

II

ONE DAY, after breakfast, she took a walk in a meadow, along the bank of a stream. It had just rained, and tousled scraps of storm clouds, black-blue and soft silver, rushed across the sky, ceaselessly changing shades and shapes. Now the sun hid away, now it emerged, causing light effects that followed each other in stark rapidity. First the poplars lining the stream's banks sparkled in the bright sunshine, while the pine forest behind them was enveloped in gloomy, listless shadow; a moment later, hot rays of light fell upon the forest, while the poplars grew dusky and almost black. But the landscape's brighter and happier hues escaped Varvara Stepanovna's notice; her longing soul was fixed on the gloom of the cold shadows. "God, how unbearable," she said with a sigh. "A penal colony . . . worse than any penal colony."

"*Comment?*" Unexpectedly, someone spoke from the other side of some tall blackberry bushes girding the stream. Varvara Stepanovna raised her head. Sitting on the bank, angling, was a decrepit old man wearing brown satin trousers and a navy blue shirt. Klobukova muttered something and made as if to continue on her way. Removing his hat, the old man greeted her.

"*Bonjour, mademoiselle!* Taking a walk? Well, the weather today isn't too shabby. Would you care to do some fishing? Please, have a seat next to an old man."

He spoke fast, mumbling and lisping as old people do, and Varvara Stepanovna was unable to follow his words. "If only this were old Nikanorych!" she thought. Neither sitting down nor leaving, she stared with distaste at his foreign face, beardless as an actor's.

"Here, I'll set up a rod for you," said the old man merrily. "It's a rather amusing thing, fishing. You, I suppose, are pretty bored here, right?"

"*Vee*," Varvara Stepanovna replied with a sad smile.

"Sure! A foreign place. . . ." The old man glanced quickly at the water before lifting his eyes to Klobukova. "You see, I think this: our country isn't bad, but if one isn't from here, one has got to be pretty bored."

Varvara Stepanovna stood in silence. . . .

"Yes. I, for instance, am about to be eighty-three years old, and I've never been farther than 50 kilometers from my village. The town of Chaumont is only six kilometers away, and yet I haven't been there more than ten times. You know, home's best."

The old man chewed his lips and fell silent for an instant. Varvara Stepanova still stood beside him. "But tell me please, *mademoiselle*, how does one get to your country? By way of Spain?"

Varvara Stepanovna explained the route from there to Russia.

"Oh, I see! Well, Austria is okay, too. A nice place. What isn't good is being away from home. My son Ernest has been abroad—in Prussia, as a prisoner of war. And what do you think? He wants some grape vodka, and he cannot say to a Prussian: 'grape vodka.' A Prussian wouldn't get it, he has a totally different word for it. And fish, for instance, isn't fish to him, but something else. Everything's different."

A bitter smirk twisted Varvara Stepanovna's mouth. The gentle words of this compassionate oldster had given her a surge of warmth, but also pain.

"Mademoiselle," he started again. "Have you met your countrymen in town?"

"*Comment?*" Varvara Stepanovna asked, listening more closely.

"Your countrymen, in Chaumont. Have you met them already?"

What's he saying? Klobukova thought, alarmed. Are there Russians in Chaumont?

"Ah, you don't know?" the old man sang out. "I can't believe they haven't told you. Oh, those people at the castle! They don't even know what to tell a person. Of course, you have fellow countrymen living in Chaumont: the Russians."

"*Pas possible!*" Varvara Stepanovna exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

The old man made a face and shrugged his shoulders.

"*Parbleu!* On Sunday I was in their shop buying hats for my grandchildren. Why don't you go see? Go to the square where the prefecture is, and there on your left is Rue Sadi Carnot. Walk up the street, past a dozen houses or so, and there, opposite the lycée, there's a millinery."

In agitation Varvara Stepanovna stared at the old man. Russians?, she thought. In Chaumont? Oh, my God! This cannot be true. What would they be doing in Chaumont, a nothing little town in central France? No, this is nonsense. The old man has it all wrong.

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"Yes, and the hats are splendid, too. Expensive, but very good, real felt. These countrymen of yours were banished from Russia," grunted the old man, stretching his legs, which had fallen asleep. "They were banished and they came to live here. From your country they chase away the Israelites. They don't want them, but we don't mind. We let them stay."

"Oh, they're kikes!" Varvara Stepanovna drew it out in her mind: "yids." And suddenly taking umbrage, she started to walk away.

"We let them stay," the old man repeated, studying the surface of the water. "Nothing wrong with it, selling hats. Why should we kick them out? Real felt. They charged me an arm and a leg, but they gave me real felt, shiny. When I sell them fish, I'll charge *them* an arm and a leg."

Having taken five or six steps, Varvara Stepanovna composed herself. She felt that she had acted discourteously. Turning toward the fisherman and trying to sound friendly, she yelled out, "*au revoir!*"

ONE COULD not say that Varvara Stepanovna hated Jews. She had never had a significant encounter with one; never observed them closely; did not associate them with any specific bad thing; could not justly feel any animosity toward them. But she found them ridiculous and worthy of contempt if not revulsion: they were repulsive, chafing creatures. Along with her father—and probably all of Mertvovodsk—she knew and could explain to you that Jews cared about nothing but commerce and money-lending, that they ate garlic and something called *kugel*, that they emitted a foul smell and had crooked noses, and, finally, that the Russian people suffered on their account. If she ever saw a ragged Jew on the street she would hold her nose and think to herself, "dirty Jew," and when she came across smartly-dressed Jews promenading on the boulevard or at the club she would mock their lack of taste and remind herself that their silks and velvets had been paid for with stolen cash.

And now, under the label of fellow countrymen, she was to be served up these same stinking Jews? For the rest of the day Klobukova felt a depressing mixture of chagrin, bitterness, and a gnawing disappointment. It was as if she had read in the newspaper that she had won the lottery and then it turned out to be a misprint, she hadn't won anything at all. . . .

Still, she thought, what if it had really happened that Russians were living here? Yes, a remote corner of the world, the sticks, the countryside—but didn't she, Klobukova, end up here? So why couldn't others? And how good that would be, how fortunate! She would have someone to talk to, to give her heart a rest. She could visit these Russians in town, and they would come to see her in the castle. Life would assume a totally different course! She could stay longer with the countess then: a year, even two. After all, no matter how you looked at it, life here was comfortable, and the pay was excellent. She could order books on embroidery, study French, subscribe to a Russian magazine. Sure, Klobukova concluded, I could arrange my life here better if there were people, Russians, even a single family. Otherwise I'll die of longing.

Up until today it had never even occurred to her that there might be Russians in Chaumont; now, the lack of them struck her as strange, almost unfair. She was getting angry. Jews: they're all over, you find them everywhere. But Russians? They're afraid to move; they sit behind their stoves and never venture forth as much as a single step.

At night, before sleep, Varvara Stepanovna sat on her bed and cried. She was thinking about her family, who just like that had let her go off to a foreign land. They should have struggled, suffered, borrowed money, done anything, but they should never have sent her so far away, to this cursed castle. They had acted greedily, selfishly.

It took a letter six days to reach Russia, crossing three borders and all of Switzerland and Austria. What if she were to die here? It could happen—no one was insured against death—and there would be none to bury her. "I'll go to town, to see those kikes!" Klobukova suddenly decided. She was overcome by a desire to spite someone, to have her revenge. "What's the big deal! I swear I'll go. By God I'll go."

The windows of her bedroom lay open to the park. The moon shone brightly; listless shadows fell along the loopy paths and across the lawns. The pond slept; so did the trees and birds; and everywhere around there reigned a deep, untroubled silence.

Like a cemetery, Klobukova thought, and I'm all alone. She got down from the bed, put out the candle, and sat by the window. "The town lies just beyond this forest. On foot, I could get there in an hour and a half." She sat still, her eyebrows raised, and stared out, at the forest and at the road to Chaumont that flanked it like a magical, shining stripe. Varvara Stepanovna could not take her eyes off that stripe. "*Zdravstvuite*," she suddenly said in Russian, smiling softly. And then, changing pitch and her tone of voice, "Hello."

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Tomorrow she might hear somebody else say this same word to her. And: "What good fortune brings you here!" And many other such things. And she would speak Russian, a lot, and for a long time! "Why shouldn't I go see them?" she asked herself. "Why not? Of course I'll go."

In the morning, when she awoke, her first thought was that today she would be going to town to see the Jews. "Kikes, so what? Even so, they're almost my own people. And what if they turn out to be decent? There are, occasionally, decent Jews. Take Dr. Morgulis: all of Mertvovodsk receives him, the best homes, he even gets invited to General Skripitsyn's Christmas party. A very decent person, no worse than your average Russian."

From nine to ten in the morning she gave the countess her massage. Immediately thereafter, she started to ready herself for her journey. But since the mailman did not make his second round of the day until two in the afternoon, and since she had marked in her notebook that today, October 18, two letters were due—one from Semen Ivanovich and one from her aunt Anfisa—she decided to wait. She ate her lunch with appetite, her face considerably less gloomy than before. She couldn't stop thinking about the Jews who lived in Chaumont, whom she envisioned looking exactly like Dr. Morgulis—neatly dressed, not rolling their r's too badly, their noses not at all crooked.

The mailman came at the usual hour, but there were no letters. This small misfortune, which recurred almost daily and customarily plunged her into a black mood, left Klobukova unmoved. "No problem. Tomorrow I'll have three letters, including one from Vasia."

Hurriedly she put on her hat and veil and headed to town.

III

THE ROAD traversed several hamlets. The peasants were threshing grain, and everywhere one could hear the rumbling whistle of the machines. Every so often huge carts clattered by carrying loads of straw or bags of grain. The fat, strong horses, harnessed in teams of four, sometimes six, stepped slowly, tranquilly, effortlessly. Along the way, the peasants bowed to Varvara Stepanovna and struck up a conversation. She spoke to them cheerfully, bravely, even if she did get confused and pause after every phrase, and she laughed loudly when, failing to comprehend something or other, she answered them at random.

She was in a strange mood. She felt happy, and she knew that the best and most interesting part lay ahead. But at the same time she was still vaguely offended at the idea that here she was, going to see Jews. She was doing something wild, insensible; somehow, it humiliated her in her own eyes.

"If I have to associate with kikes, I wish they'd come to see me first. But there they are, sitting at home, happy as clams, and I'm running after them."

Her thoughts ruffled and confused her, and with all her strength she chased away these gusts of flaming anger. "What can you do," she asked herself. "No wonder the Ukrainians have a saying: 'In a foreign city, seeing a dog is almost as good as seeing your own father.' And besides, they couldn't really come to see me. How would they have known I'm here? Plus, they wouldn't dare. And anyway, it's only me who's such a ninny as to need fellow countrymen. Someone else in my place wouldn't even *want* to see them."

As she approached the town, her offense gave way to a pleasant rush of anticipation. Funny, isn't it, she thought, an uncontrollable smile appearing on her lips: How strange! How terribly strange! And then, entering the town, crossing a railroad bridge, she had a new and jarring idea. What if the Jews decline to see me? What if they treat me coldly or even rudely? Didn't they emigrate from Russia because things were bad for them there, because they were oppressed? That must mean they don't like Russia and Russians. They could, perhaps, insult me.

They wouldn't dare! Varvara Stepanova was becoming angry again, though she realized her anger was misplaced. Why shouldn't they, after all? What's to hold them back? Here they have nothing to fear. And suddenly she herself was overcome by fear. More than ever before, she felt lonely, abandoned, forgotten. And Aunt Anfisa isn't writing, and Vasia isn't, either.

She stopped. Her eyes, fixed on the tall building of the prefect of police, filled with sadness and self-pity. For a couple of minutes she stood stock still. "No, it's okay. I'm going!" She shook off her stupor. "I'm going. What will be, will be!"

She hastened across the square in front of the prefecture, her heart trembling as she saw a dark blue sign, "Rue Sadi Carnot," on the yellowish wall of the tall corner building. She stared at the white letters, which seemed to smile and bow in her direction. Strange, she thought, walking up the street, so strange.

In about a hundred steps Varvara Stepanovna approached the lycée. The building was set back from

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the street, surrounded by a large garden, and she could see only heavy gates and an ornate fence. Klobukova walked along the length of the fence as shadows from its wrought-iron ornaments swam across her face and bodice. At the end she saw a large house, gray, with balconies. Next to it stood another house, white. Across the road, in a squat brick building, there was a glass door and over the door a sign: "*Chapellerie moderne.*"

"Of course, it's here," Varvara Stepanovna said out loud. "Here!"

SHE RAN across the street and, climbing the front steps, peered inside. A short, stooped, scrawny man, his hair completely gray, stood behind the counter, staring sorrowfully at the street through the window. He had only one eye, a blemish that was imperfectly concealed by the big round spectacles sitting athwart his short, fleshy nose. With his left hand he grasped a shelf cluttered with hat boxes while his right hand drummed lazily on the counter.

"Well, isn't this strange?" Varvara Petrovna said to herself. "It's as though he were uncle Afanasii Petrovich, and I'm about to surprise him by turning up." She pushed open the door and, hardly over the threshold, called in a resounding voice: "*Zdravstvuite!* Well, hello!"

The gray-haired man behind the counter made a strange, jerking motion. His glasses jumped, the large round lenses sparkling.

"Oy . . . what's that?" he exclaimed, startled. He froze for a moment. Then he swiftly turned his face to the dark-red curtain behind the counter and yelled for all he was worth: "Dvoira! Dvoira! Come here right away, Dvoira! Oy, look what's happening here!" He was speaking in Yiddish, and Varvara Stepanovna smiled inwardly at the guttural sounds that she could not understand but recognized so well.

"You're Russian? You're from Russia? When did you come from Russia?" The old man threw himself at Klobukova. "Oh, how wonderful! So you're from Russia! Where from? What province? Taurida? No? From Kherson? Oh, my God! That's incredible! That's so precious!"

With both hands he shook Varvara Stepanovna's small hand, still shouting in agitation: "You know, we've been here eleven years now, and this is only the third time I've seen a Russian person. Only the third time. In eleven years! *Kha!* What do you say to that? Dvoira! Come now! Come, look, just look who's here!"

Well, no, they won't hurt me, Varvara Stepanovna thought, smiling gently at the agitated Jew. How excited he is to see me! What a funny little fellow! The red curtain fluttered, and Dvoira entered, a short plump woman wearing a dark-brown dress. Hers was a typical Jewish face, with a large curved nose and big beady eyes. Tranquilly, carrying herself with cold pride, she bowed to Klobukova and stood by the counter.

"Russian, you see! She's Russian!" the excited old man pointed to Varvara Stepanovna.

Dvoira made a wry face. "What are you so happy about?" she asked him in a half-whisper, in Yiddish. "Did you receive an inheritance, or what?"

The old man regarded his wife in bafflement, then turned again to Varvara Stepanovna and started rattling: "My name's Shapiro. We're from Russia. . . . Of course, we're from Krivaia Balka. Oh yes! We used to live in Krivaia Balka. And you, permit me to ask you: here visiting? Passing through town? And how much longer will you stay? Oh, what a wonderful thing! Simply incredible! But please come into the room. Why are we standing here? Please, please come in!"

"She's fine where she is," Dvoira grumbled in Yiddish, angrily pursing her lips. "She can go back where she came from."

Bewildered, Shapiro glanced at his wife. "Ah, you'd better be quiet," he mumbled softly but very dramatically. "My God, what's come over you?"

"Please, come into the dining room," he called out to Varvara Stepanovna, dashing to the curtain and pulling it open with an energetic motion. "Oh, how did it all happen, that you went away so far from home? Here, please, sit here, in the armchair, by the light, by the window, please! Dvoira, invite her, nu!"

"Well, sit down," Dvoira said gloomily as if forcing herself to speak. "I guess we can sit for a while."

All three entered the dining room and sat, and Varvara Stepanovna started to tell them the story of where she was from and how she found herself in France.

"Ah, forgive me, please," Shapiro suddenly jumped up from his chair. "Forgive me for interrupting—just for a minute. I should call for a samovar."

"Why a samovar?" Dvoira confronted her husband in a deep low voice. "No need—the water boils faster with gas."

"Oh no, Dvoirochka! Gas? Don't you get it? This is a Russian person. She needs tea from a samovar!

"We don't have any coal," Dvoira muttered.

"No coal?" Shapiro grabbed his head with both

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hands and made a comically pitiful face. "Oy, what a misfortune! It isn't possible to find coal in this town? It really isn't possible? In the whole town they've burned up all the coal? Georgette! Georgette!" he dashed to the door. "Georgette, run quick to Monsieur Petitjean's shop and bring some coal. And put on the samovar, quick! And do it in one minute, in one second!" He was speaking in some extraordinary, homegrown, French-Russian-Yiddish dialect. Varvara Stepanovna couldn't help smiling.

This little old Jew is all right, rushed through her head: hospitable, kind, it seems. But her feelings were moving faster than her thoughts, and her feelings did not care for her mind's condescending tone. Her entire being was drawn to this noisily bustling Jew and even to his gloomy, pouty wife. Happy, excited, she continued her tale about life at the castle, speaking with complete openness, concealing nothing, and all the while feeling as though she were addressing members of her own family or people she had known for a long time.

Dvoira maintained her harsh expression, but her husband could not tear his eyes away from Varvara Stepanovna; nor, like her, could he stop smiling. At times he lost his self-control, exclaiming "Oh, my God," "Nu! Nu!" or "That's wonderful!" And these exclamations reflected not so much the stories Varvara Stepanovna told as the marvelously delightful and joyful state that had suddenly gripped his heart and soul.

Turning to the subject of her loneliness and longing, Klobukova tried to sound humorous, but Shapiro, it seemed, knew well the bitterness and anguish that lay hiding beneath. Sorrowfully he looked at Varvara Stepanovna, sighing with compassion and rocking his head. "Of course, of course," he said under his breath. "What do you expect—so far from home. And besides, it's your first time. And you are still a child. A child, no less. When a person is thrown like this into a foreign place, surely he is the most miserable individual in the whole wide world. . . ."

IV

THEN SHAPIRO started telling in turn about his business and his children. Their son Solomon worked as a *chef d'atelier* at "the biggest" hat factory in Lyon. Their daughter was doing well in school and, God willing, would become a doctor. Now Dunechka was visiting her brother in Lyon, but in a few days she was coming back "and you'll see for herself what a beauty she is and how well educated." As he talked about their children, his wife Dvoira's face became less gloomy, and she even put in a few words. Cheered, her husband brightened still more and began to speak even more openly and loudly.

"Why did you leave Russia?" Varvara Stepanovna asked.

Shapiro became flustered. "It just turned out that way." An embarrassed, guilty smile appeared on his face. "Do I know why? Silliness. I got it into my head and I left."

"Did you have a hard life in Krivaia Balka?"

"Hard?" Shapiro curled his eyebrows. "Not hard, but you know. . . . We lived the way everybody does. But you know, well, how could I explain this to you? Oh, yes, for instance: fish seek deeper waters, and man—"

"—Why are you telling tales?" Dvoira suddenly interrupted, noisily pulling up her chair and pressing both elbows to the table. "'Fish seek deeper waters. . . .' Did she ask you about fish? We escaped from Krivaia Balka because of the pogroms. There's the answer for you!"

"Please, Dvoira. Leave it be!" Shapiro said in a shrill, almost frightened voice. "Leave it be. This isn't the right time."

"It's always the right time! What kind of secrets are these? Why leave it out? You think we had a sweet life there? We suffered, we endured, our entire life we were just trying to survive. And then came the good people—your Russian people—and made a pogrom, and everything we had in the house they destroyed instantly."

"So, they destroyed it. So, so what's to do about it now?" Shapiro beseeched his wife. "Please let's not talk about it."

"And they whacked him in the eye with an iron," Dvoira raised her voice. "And he's been blind ever since. He lost his eye. Why would we stay there after that? Tell me, please. So they could torment us some more? You think it wasn't enough? I think we'd had plenty. So that's why we left. We were going to America, but on our way my brilliant husband's other eye started to hurt—the eyes are connected, and when one hurts, the other responds—and he nearly went totally blind. So we couldn't go any further, and when we got to Chaumont he had to be hospitalized. And I and my two children were left on the pavement. And it looked like our only option was to lie down and die, or else throw ourselves under the train. What else? What to do? But let me tell you, maybe the people here aren't as nice as in Russia . . . don't interrupt!" Dvoira yelled, casting a furious glance at her husband.

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"Don't interrupt, I'm telling you, be quiet! I, thank God, haven't gone mad yet! I too am allowed to say a few words!

"Here the people didn't take out our eyes, you know," she went on, turning toward Varvara Stepanovna. "And they didn't rob us; oh, no. They gave us shelter and a job—sewing visors on hats. My Solomon and I, we worked day and night, first visors, then ribbons, and when this president of mine came out of the hospital, not only did we have food on the table but we also had an apartment and had managed to save up seventy francs. You see?"

Dvoira sat with her arms akimbo and proudly nodded her head. "Could we possibly have had all this in Russia? What do you think? And so we settled here, and thank God, we're happy here."

"Happy, eh?" Shapiro sang out in a quiet voice, looking sadly at the plush frames holding pictures of Chaumont that were hanging on the wall in front of him.

"Yes, happy! Just so you know, we're happy. In Russia he was a tailor. There we were always hungry. And now, look at our store. This is no small thing! And no one abuses us or hurts us, and no one makes our life miserable, no one yells 'stinking kike!' at us. We're treated like people here, you see!"

And Dvoira again spread her arms in an expressive gesture and leaned back against the chair. Having gotten everything off her chest in front of Varvara Stepanova, she evidently felt relieved: the poutiness in her expression had disappeared, and instead she shone with an air of independence and proud contentment.

Varvara Stepanovna looked at the Jewish woman cautiously, out of the corner of her eye. For the first time in her life, she had had a long conversation with Jews; for the first time, she had listened carefully and seriously, without a desire to mock. Dvoira's seething words made her feel quiet and sad, and dimly self-reproachful.

"But tell me please," Shapiro asked in a small voice. "You probably know how things are now in our Kherson province, are the crops good?"

"Bad, I think. Everything got scorched."

"Scorched again!"

Dvoira quaked her shoulders contemptuously.

"So what's going to happen now?" the old man continued, as if thinking out loud. "Well, in Krivaia Balka they do have some retail stores—although now, of course, what sort of sales can they expect? But what's going to happen in the villages? In Korenikha, for instance? Or in Chervonnoe, in Starye Krinitsy?"

He grew silent for a minute. Then he sighed. "People are going to die," he answered his own question.

"Vey!" Dvoira burst in, derisively pressing her lips together. "What's the great sorrow? Let them."

Shapiro swiftly raised his head. "Dvoira!" he moaned, folding his hands on his chest. "Why now? Why, I ask you?" And turning to Varvara Stepanovna he said: "You know—it's all a show. You're sitting here, a Russian, and she wants to show you that she's angry with the Russians and cannot stand them. But in actuality," Shapiro glanced at his wife with a sad smile. "In actuality, it's she who started calling our daughter 'Dunia,' 'Dunechka.'"

"That means nothing," Dvoira said, taken aback.

"In Russia we called our little girl by her Jewish name, Branka. And the Russian urchins would yell: 'banker,' 'wanker,' 'tanker,' and other rhymes they'd come up with."

"When a Russian needs to offend a Jew, he knows how to find good rhymes," Dvoira added.

"But no matter how much they insulted our little girl, we paid no heed and continued to call her our way: Branka. But since we went abroad, my wife started calling her Dunia, Dunechka. What? Isn't it true?"

Dvoira was silent. A sorrowing smile played faintly on her full lips. Varvara Stepanovna looked at Shapiro, then at his wife. She wanted to say something nice, tender, warm, but for some reason she felt awkward, and the words would not come. But then Georgette rolled into the room, a round old French lady in a white apron and bonnet, and set a samovar and glasses on the table.

"*Nous voici à Moscou maintenant*," she burbled in a kindly voice. "*Du thé, le samovar, une belle demoiselle russe. . . . Ah, que j'aime la jeunesse!*"

Dvoira poured. No doubt she was tired of being dour, and her husband's words had knocked the wind out of her sails. Gradually her face lost its final traces of grimness; she was becoming more and more friendly. Ceremoniously, with a certain affectation, she waited on Varvara Stepanovna, insisting that she take four—no fewer than four—lumps of sugar with her tea, and diligently spooning first cherry and then apricot preserves onto her plate, followed by brown pastries with honey that she had baked herself. As the conversation grew livelier, they jumped from topic to topic, but no matter what they talked about—people, buildings, weather, hatmaking—everything was connected with Russia and Russians. Dvoira's tongue was finally untied, and she jabbered loudly in a singsong. Varvara Stepanovna's face, a typical, good Russian face, white with rosy cheeks, clear blue eyes, and a

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fresh, affectionately smiling mouth, was an invitation to open up, and within a half-hour Dvoira no longer held any secrets from her guest. She was emptying her whole heart.

And Varvara Stepanovna also talked, talked and smiled, listening to her own voice and her words in quiet wonderment. How unexpected this all was! How strange! How unusual! And how long it was since she had been in such pleasant and entertaining company!

Now Shapiro was the only one with little to say. Three times he returned to the store to wait on customers, and when he returned he sat quietly and listened to the women talk. His expression had grown pensive, gently doleful, and now and then a quiet, forgiving smile surfaced on his bloodless lips.

Dvoira took Klobukova to look at Dunechka's room, showed her her daughter's photograph, her books and notebooks, and then started taking her trousseau out of the closets and trunks. Already she had put away four eiderdown comforters, and a fifth was in the works; there were dozens of different undershirts and blouses, cuts of silk and satin. "She says she doesn't need all this," Dvoira said. "All she worries about are her studies. Does a child understand? She wants to be a doctor. With pleasure! But a down comforter cannot hurt."

"Haven't you had enough?" Shapiro stopped his wife. "Put away the rags, why don't you talk of something else?"

"No, about this, about this," Varvara Stepanovna yelled playfully, digging into a new pile of lingerie. "If you would please not interrupt us. This is women's business."

"That's right!" Dvoira agreed. "Women's business. And you—sit here and listen, philosopher!"

For a while longer the women went through clothes and chatted away. Varvara Stepanovna liked Dvoira more and more. She now thought that, both in appearance and in character, this new acquaintance resembled her cousin twice removed Vasilisa Efremovna, wife of the rural deacon from Novopokrovsk. Her cheeks, too, were chubby and red, and her waist started under her shoulder blades, and she laughed just the same way, raucously and heartily. A little funny but dear, very dear.

V

ABOUT AN hour and a half later, Klobukova picked up her hat and announced she was leaving. But Dvoira, bowing ceremoniously and pulling a face, tried to remove the hat from her hands. "Let's say," she said in a sugary falsetto, "let's say we won't let you go, and you'll stay for supper. Today, by the way, is Friday."

The invitation both gladdened and confused Varvara Stepanovna. She had no desire whatsoever to hurry back to the castle, but she didn't want to take advantage of her new acquaintances' hospitality. "It will be too late to return," she objected indecisively.

"And why should you return late, when you can return early?" Shapiro asked with a sly smile.

Varvara Stepanovna thought she knew what he meant, but it only added to her embarrassment. "Yes, exactly," the old man went on. "Your countess gets up at nine, so if you sleep over and leave here bright and early, you'll surely make it back in time."

"Ah, that's wonderful!" Dvoira splashed the air with her hands. "That's the best thing to do. Makes the most sense. You'll sleep in Dunechka's room."

A half-hour later all three settled around the festively set table. Six candles stood lit in new nickel-plated candlesticks, and in front of them, under a starched, snow-white napkin, loomed two large challahs. Customarily the Shapiros' Friday evening meal was accompanied by solemn rituals, but this time, for the sake of their guest, Shapiro simplified matters considerably, and after a brief prayer he sat down at the head of the table. A fish course was served—stuffed carp—followed by a traditional broth with noodles, then chicken and compote.

"And where's the *kugel*?" Varvara Stepanovna inquired.

Dvoira explained that one ate *kugel* on Saturday, at midday, and that the tasty dish in question was still baking in the oven. "There's no *kugel* for you," Shapiro chimed in, "but you will get to sing *zemiros*."

"What's that, *zemiros*?"

"They're Sabbath songs. We sing them between courses, in Hebrew, the ancient Jewish tongue."

"Oh, please sing, please!"

"Will you help with the high notes?"

"Yes, yes. Please start."

Shapiro cleared his throat, rubbed the outside of his windpipe with a finger as if to clear it, and led an ornate oriental-sounding song in a trembling, goaty voice:

He who sanctifies the Sabbath properly,
He who observes it unprofaned,
Will have a great reward. . . .

"Sing along, go ahead," said Dvoira, who didn't understand a single word of Hebrew, nudging Klobukova. Varvara Stepanovna opened her mouth and sang with an expression of timidity and reverence. For a minute or two, a wondrous cacophony filled the room. Then the old man's voice climbed

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somewhere very high and, halting suddenly, he started to laugh.

"We don't have a conductor, that's why," he explained.

They rose late from the table; it was after nine. Varvara Stepanovna felt both tired and almost intoxicated from all these new and unexpected impressions. She was pleased, amused, and also a bit melancholy. She thought of her own family, of her longing to see them, and of her recent despair. "Dear, dear," she thought, looking at the shortish Dvoira, so wishing to pour tenderness upon her, to hug and to kiss her.

VI

GEORGETTE PUT out the candles, wished her employers good night, and retired.

Dvoira lay in bed, stretching with pleasure. It was quiet. The dense white curtains swallowed the moonlight, and a transparent, pale green dusk permeated the room. "Well? What do you say to this whole business?" she asked in a half-whisper.

Shapiro sat on an ottoman by the window. Light fell on him from behind; his expressive, sorrowful face was covered in thick shadow. "All sorts of encounters happen," he replied vaguely. "So this one had to happen too."

"Such a remarkable person," Dvoira put in, speaking with passion but without raising her voice. "So gentle, so polite. Just like our own child, I swear!"

"She must be well educated," Shapiro said. "You know, they torment us, but their young people, when they're well educated, they're so good, so good, there are none better in the whole world."

"So modest, so tender!"

"Remember, in Krivaia Balka, Vasyl Ivanovich, the priest's son . . . he was later exiled to Siberia?"

"When she saw Dunechka's corsets, the ones embroidered in silk and lace, she sighed with awe," Dvoira recalled, dreamily staring at the ceiling. "That's okay, it's good for her to know."

Shapiro didn't reply. He sat, his hands resting on his knees, his head tilted to the side. Several minutes passed in silence. At the lycée across the street the clock tolled the eleventh hour, slowly, with long pauses. The final beat was especially long and sad, as if sighing after the somber place of its birth even while slipping from the narrow and suffocating clocktower and flying up toward the bright moon and the free sky.

"You know, Dvoirenu, what I'm thinking right now?" Shapiro lifted up his head.

"What?"

"I'm thinking this: suppose back then, you and I had suffered through everything and never left Krivaia Balka. Then, say, for instance, our grandchildren, or even our great-grandchildren—would they be able to live there safely, like human beings?"

Startled, Dvoira stirred in bed. "Oh, the old song!" she said in vexation.

Shapiro didn't reply. "Sure, it's old," he acknowledged after a pause. "Old is right." He sat still, his head tilted toward his left shoulder.

"In front of the little house where our *heder* stood, there was always a swampy patch," he spoke again, unhurriedly, smiling a quiet, clumsy, pained smile. "And whenever it rained, a sort of pond would form there, and the boys used to go wading. They would roll up their trousers to the groin and roam around in it. Me, too. And my grandmother would drag me out and beat me. I would weep, and my grandmother would weep, and she would give me a cookie. I had scrofula on my legs, and when I waded in that water it got inflamed. I wonder if the little house is still there, and that swamp."

"Please, go to bed already," Dvoira whispered with irritation. "Sleep!"

Shapiro didn't move. Something knocked against the ceiling: upstairs, in Dunechka's room, Varvara Stepanovna was throwing off her boots.

"Fifty years we lived and worked there," the old man went on sorrowfully. "Our fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers are all buried there. . . . And four children."

Dvoira turned noisily to the wall. "So what do you want? Why all this now? Now he's going to drag it out and drag it out again. Go to bed, I'm telling you!" Strangled tears could be heard in her trembling voice.

Shapiro sighed loudly. "If the time came . . . if only for the grandchildren, for the great-grandchildren," he muttered.

Dvoira no longer responded. "They'll get hit on the head with a log," her heart was crying out. But she suppressed the words and lay without moving, her head covered with the blanket.

Shapiro looked over at his wife; he wanted to say more, but he took pity. Quietly he got up and went out into the yard. There, near the cellar, in a broad band of shadow, stood a large planter and in it a short, stocky boxwood tree. The French are fond of these shrubs, which are in leaf throughout the year and provide green branches for decorating headstones. Earlier in the evening the little tree had been watered, and now, under the bright rays of the moon, the green drops on its dark branches sparkled like firebugs.

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Shapiro sat on the edge of the wooden planter and turned his face to the sky. With his lone eye he gazed mournfully at the clear, docile moon pouring its light on this alien Chaumont as well as on that distant, sorrowful country where they had taken out his eye, where his dear ones were buried, a country to which he felt such a solid, such a sacred claim. He gazed, and in his despondent heart he sang again the old, old song: if only for the grandchildren, if only for the great-grandchildren, if only one day. . . .

—Paris, 1902

Translator's Notes

PAGE 30. Varvara Stepanovna Klobukova: Varvara is the Russian equivalent of Barbara, and it points directly to "barbarian" (*varvar*). Klobukova derives from *klobuk*, referring to the headgear of an Orthodox monk.

Mertvovodsk: a fictitious name; literally, "[Town] of Dead Waters."

Saint-Blin: the name of a French village in the Haute-Marne region where Aizman and his wife, a physician, lived from 1898 to 1902.

Ekaterinoslav: now Dnepropetrovsk, in Ukraine.

Ils sont si soumis, les russes: "they are so pliant, the Russians."

PAGE 31. Vonliarskii, Vasilii (1814-1852): a popular belletrist of the 1840's-1850's.

PAGE 32. Chaumont: town in the Haute-Marne region of France.

PAGE 35. Krivaia Balka: like Varvara's Mertvovodsk, the Shapiros' Krivaia Balka is an invented name. Most likely it refers to Krivoi Rog, a town in the Kherson province of the Russian empire, presently in Ukraine, where anti-Jewish violence took place in 1883; the name also evokes Balta, a town in the former Podolia province where a pogrom erupted in 1882.

PAGE 37. Dunia, Dunechka: diminutives of the Russian Christian name Evdokiia.

Nous voici à Moscou, etc.: "Here we are now in Moscow. Tea, a samovar, a young Russian beauty. . . . Oh, how I love youth!"

PAGE 38. "He who sanctifies": the opening of the first of the melodies traditionally sung at the Sabbath meal.

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The Scandal of "Diversity"

Jonathan Kay

In late June the Supreme Court is expected to hand down a decision on the constitutionality of race-guided admissions policies at the University of Michigan undergraduate college and law school. One sign of the momentousness of this occasion is that, a few days before the Court was to begin hearing arguments on the two cases in early April, the *New York Times* dedicated the whole of its op-ed page to the subject of affirmative action. Two of the articles were noteworthy—one because of what the author said, the other because its authors said nothing.

The latter piece, cosigned by Lawrence H. Summers, the president of Harvard, and Laurence H. Tribe, a professor at Harvard's law school, was a study in the circular reasoning that America's elite educators, enthusiastically seconded by influential opinion molders like the editors of the *Times* itself, use to justify race preferences. Rather than arguing from evidence, the two authors simply declare affirmative action to be an institution that right-minded people have come to endorse. The policies followed by the University of Michigan, they write, are supported by a "record-setting 66 friend-of-the-court briefs." This reflects "a broad consensus supporting the value of racial diversity at our nation's universities," as well as the "learned" opinion among educators that "racial diversity helps students confront perspectives other than their own" and "helps break down prejudices and stereotypes." In other words: affirmative action is good because we say it is.

But then there was, thankfully, the other *Times* op-ed piece on the same day: a much more substantive treatment of the subject by Stanley Rothman, a political scientist at Smith College who has recently completed a study (with Seymour Martin Lipset and Neil Nevitte) on the effect of racial diversity on educational quality at American universities. While Rothman takes no view on the two Michigan cases, his research refutes the mantras flung about so casually by Tribe and Summers.

The benefits of "diversity"—i.e., the mix of races and ethnicities that is brought about by affirmative action—have been investigated before. But previous studies cited by proponents of affirmative action have generally relied on the readiness of students and educators to provide socially approved responses. Thus, an oft-cited 1999 survey of law students at Harvard and the University of Michigan asked respondents whether, in their view, diversity "enhances or detracts from how you and others think about problems and solutions in class."

The Rothman survey, by contrast, omitted from its questionnaire any reference to "diversity" or similar mother's-milk terms. Instead, students from 140 U.S. universities and colleges were asked to rate their scholastic experiences, and the responses were correlated with data on black enrollment.

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The results, published in the spring issue of the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, show that student satisfaction and perceived educational quality varied *inversely* with the proportion of enrolled African-American students. The data also indicate that "diversity contributed to the incidence of encounters perceived as discriminatory rather than decreasing them, [even] after controlling for a student's membership in a historically victimized group."

Rothman's research goes to the heart of the constitutional debate about affirmative action in university admissions. In the 1978 case of *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke*, which was the last time the Court addressed the issue directly, Justice Lewis Powell famously concluded that a university's interest in achieving "the educational benefits that flow from an ethnically diverse student body" is sufficiently compelling to justify some consideration of race in admissions. No other Justice signed on to this aspect of Powell's opinion. But his argument survived for a quarter-century because it served to square a crucial circle: by repackaging affirmative action as a win-win proposition—good for the specially admitted students *and* for their classmates—the diversity rationale gave jurists and scholars a pretext for passing over its stubbornly unconstitutional character. But the win-win fiction is sustainable only if one assumes, as Powell did, a possible link between diversity and educational quality. If that link is shown to be nonexistent, the argument falls apart.

YALE UNIVERSITY, where I studied law in the mid-90's, is certainly an adherent of the Harvard "consensus" that Tribe and Summers describe. When it comes to admissions, educational programs, and employment, the school claims in its official policy statements that it does not discriminate for or against any individual on the basis of race, color, or ethnic origin. But it is widely known that Yale officials take whatever informal measures are required to increase the representation of minorities on campus. During my time at the law school, like now, just under 10 percent of each year's slots were assigned to African-Americans—this, despite the fact that few black applicants meet the school's general standard for undergraduate grade-point averages and/or scores on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). In this respect, Yale is typical of all highly ranked law schools, including the University of Michigan.[1]

"Diversity," then, is very much in evidence at Yale. Setting aside the constitutional and moral issues, one might also expect it to flower there. The reason is simple. On some campuses, the ugliest aspect of affirmative action as currently implemented is that, by bringing in a population of underqualified students, it inevitably generates a racially stratified hierarchy of academic performance. At Yale's law school, however, classes are pass/fail affairs that, in practice, everybody passes. While it is possible for students to earn an "honors" grade in their course work, the school's culture actively discourages *Paperchase*-style competition. Indeed, an aphorism frequently recited among the faculty in my day was that, once admitted to Yale, students were "off the treadmill."

But as my first year of law school wore on, it became clear that this was not quite true. Though grades count for less at Yale than at most schools, extracurricular activities count for more. The typical student has high ambitions. He does not merely dream of passing the local bar exam and joining a firm but rather aspires to become a judge, an academic, or a federal prosecutor—goals requiring, as a first step, the steady accumulation of accolades during one's term at law school itself. These include, most notably, membership on the editorial staff of the prestigious *Yale Law Journal*.

From the point of view of race relations, the *Journal* presents a problem. Under the rules in place during my time, applicants were required to complete a 48-hour take-home exam testing their abilities in writing, editing, and the formatting of legal footnotes. The identities of the test-takers were unknown to the graders, and no accommodation was made for "underrepresented minorities." Out of 84 white applicants in my year, 52 made the cut, as did five out of twelve Asians. Out of the seven black applicants, none was successful.

This was not a one-time phenomenon. In the previous year's competition, eleven blacks had applied, of whom only one was accepted. The result was that, overall, the editorial membership of the *Journal* was overwhelmingly white and Asian. Out of 113 members, only two were black.

When these numbers were released, a scandal erupted. *Journal* officials convened a public meeting to discuss the problem, filling one of the law school's biggest classrooms with a standing-room-only crowd that stayed for three hours. It was an angry meeting—and also an awkward one. The problem was that no one dared mention the most obvious explanation for the racial imbalance that

[1] For a thorough discussion of admissions policies at the University of Michigan, see "Race Preference and the Universities—A Final Reckoning?" by Carl Cohen in the September 2001 COMMENTARY.

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everybody decried. To refer, even obliquely, to the race-tagged stratification of talent at the school would have been humiliating for black students. So instead we censored ourselves and invoked esoteric theories of racial exclusion.

The most popular of these was that black applicants approached the writing component of the *Journal* exam with a special "black" style that was routinely and unfairly marked down by the test's administrators. Some speakers argued that the test itself, like other such standardized exercises, amounted to a collection of culturally biased riddles. At the meeting, and in other campus discussions of the issue, many of my classmates folded their criticisms into a more general argument: the will of black applicants had been sapped by the "institutional racism" that allegedly pervaded Yale Law School.

It was around this time that I began noticing a broadening social estrangement at the school along racial lines. Since the only way to explain the racial gap at the *Law Journal* while simultaneously preserving the academic dignity of black students was to endorse various theories of alienation, black students were encouraged to see signs of such alienation in the neo-Gothic law school's every frieze and stained-glass medallion. A great deal was made of the absence of black "role models" on campus—especially black female role models. One of my fellow students argued in a public complaint that "in this environment, women students of color must fashion their professional personas out of thin air, because almost none of their professional mentors look anything like them." Another lamented: "How can I think that my ideas are respected here when people who are just like me—black women—aren't considered 'good enough' to teach here as full professors?"

Much grist was provided by small incidents. When a study group ejected one of its members, a black student whose contributions were sub-par, the spurned member posted a *J'accuse* manifesto charging racism. In another case, one of my classmates complained in an essay that she had been "excluded and alienated from the classroom environment" by her criminal-law professor, who had unconscionably confined discussion about race to a three-week segment of the semester.

In the classroom, certainly, the promised educational benefits of diversity (like helping to "break down prejudices and stereotypes," in the words of Tribe and Summers) rarely materialized. By promoting the idea that blacks thought and wrote in a special black style, the fallout from the *Law Journal* scandal reinforced the conceit—already popularized by then-trendy doctrines like Critical Race Theory—that blacks and whites inhabit mutually impenetrable ideological worlds. Whites became increasingly reluctant to offer any comment that might be interpreted as threatening to blacks, while classroom comments by black students on any race-charged issue would almost always go unchallenged. Among my white peers, there was a feeling that sentiments expressed by black students had to be treated as correct *for blacks*, and therefore immune from refutation. In general, most students were terrified of being accused of racism; when a subject connected to race came up, they either uttered platitudes or kept their mouths shut.

None of this is to suggest that race relations at the law school were overtly hostile. While many black students maintained a largely segregated social existence, others did not. Indeed, the most popular student in our class was Cory Booker, an African-American Rhodes scholar who would later run for mayor of Newark, with the substantial financial backing of fellow alumni. But, on the whole, my experience at Yale had me nodding in agreement with the conclusion of Stanley Rothman and his co-authors that diversity on U.S. campuses has "contributed to the incidence of encounters perceived as discriminatory rather than decreasing them."

It is important to stress that the problem at Yale and other schools lies not with racial diversity *per se*—which only a bigot could oppose—but rather with the artificial "diversity" that is the product of affirmative action. As my experience at Yale showed, it is impossible to construct an academic environment in which every type of meritocratic ranking or competition is eliminated. Eventually, the wheat and the chaff get separated. When blacks find themselves disproportionately represented in the chaff, "institutional racism" and other supposedly explanatory theories follow, and interracial relations suffer.[2]

The obvious solution is to eliminate racial preferences. As Thomas Sowell argued long ago, if you send a second-quintile student who is black to a first-quintile school, he will see racism everywhere; if you send him to a second-quintile school, things will be fine. But so long as the Harvard "consen-

[2] The sort of law-journal controversy I observed at Yale is hardly uncommon, according to a scholarly analysis of journal membership at U.S. law schools. In eighteen of nineteen cases studied, minority representation was at least one full standard deviation below minority representation in the school at large. See Dorene Sarnoski, "The Law Review Selection Process: An Analysis of its Disparate Impact on Minority Students," *Journal of Law and Inequality*, Vol. 7 (1989).

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sus" holds sway, that will never happen. For under such a race-blind scheme, few blacks would be represented in the best schools—a horrifying result for most educators. Proponents of race-based admissions point to the example of the University of Texas. In 1996, its elite law school had an entering class that was about 6-percent black. When its affirmative-action program was struck down by a federal appeals court in *Hopwood* v. *State of Texas*, the change was dramatic: the 1997 entering class, selected without the use of racial preferences, was less than 1-percent black.

Is the mere fact that a certain result would be unseemly from a chromatic point of view a legally sufficient basis for discrimination? Obviously the *Hopwood* court did not think so. For 25 years, the constitutional legitimacy of affirmative action has instead hung on Powell's theory of diversity. But now that the benefits of diversity itself are being called into question—at least with regard to the enforced diversity practiced by U.S. colleges and universities—how long can this pretext of legitimacy be sustained?

The University of Michigan's own appeal to the benefits of diversity has been extraordinarily weak. Patricia Gurin, a professor of psychology at Michigan who is acting as the school's expert witness, has access to the most complete database of college-student information in the United States—the longitudinal study of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, containing information on some 1,800 institutions and over 11 million students—but she has conspicuously failed to glean from it any direct evidence that diversity improves the quality of education.[3] Rothman's study puts the case more strongly still.

I would go even further. Not only does diversity fail to deliver what its advocates promise, but eliminating race-based admissions could have a *positive* educational effect. By yielding dramatically lower numbers of blacks at elite schools, it might embarrass America's education establishment into confronting the race gap head-on, instead of sweeping the problem under the rug or hiding it behind a façade of artificially diverse classrooms.

THE EXTENT of this problem is, indeed, shocking, and in a way few Americans appreciate—particularly with regard to the most selective schools. Of the almost 91,000 applicants wishing to begin their studies at accredited law schools in the fall of 2002, approximately 4,500 had undergraduate grade-point averages of at least 3.5 and LSAT scores of at least 165—the standard that most applicants must meet to gain entry to a top-ten law school.[4] Of this group, 81 percent identified themselves as white; 10 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander; 0.65 percent as black. That is, there were only 29 self-identified blacks in the whole national applicant pool with numbers that, for a typical white candidate, would gain admission into a top-ten law school—or about three blacks per school. If the pool is further restricted to applicants with LSAT scores of at least 170 and grade-point averages of at least 3.75—the category into which fall over 50 percent of students admitted into Yale Law School—the numbers are even more lopsided: 636 whites, 83 Asians, and precisely one black.

Whatever outward professions the schools may make concerning their admissions policies, then, the numbers clearly indicate that enforced "diversity" at the top schools has required a level of wholesale racial gerrymandering that goes far beyond the model of affirmative action as a modest "plus" factor conceived by Powell. To quote Judge Danny Boggs of the Sixth Circuit, arguing in dissent in the appellate round of the Michigan law-school case last year:

> Even if student diversity were a compelling state interest, the [University of Michigan] law school's admission scheme could not be considered narrowly tailored to that interest. Even a cursory glance at the law school's admissions data reveals the staggering magnitude of the law school's racial preference. Its admissions officers have swapped tailor's shears for a chainsaw.

Of course, there are beneficiaries of the current system—namely, the preferentially admitted blacks who graduate every year from elite institutions. The education, connections, and status they receive give them the sort of entry into professional circles that was largely denied to African-Americans until only a few decades ago. But the price paid for this privilege has been enormous. Powell's hope—the basis of his linchpin opinion in *Bakke*—was that diversity might lead to an "atmosphere

[3] Instead, the University of Michigan purports to show that diversity may *indirectly* improve educational quality by boosting the efficacy of such collateral programs as ethnic-studies courses, racial workshops, and other so-called "diversity activities." Even this tenuous connection is unsupported, however. For a detailed treatment, see the January 2003 analysis of the University of Michigan's position prepared by Thomas E. Wood and Malcolm J. Sherman for the National Association of Scholars at www.nas.org/rhe2.pdf.

[4] Detailed information on admission rates cross-indexed by LSAT scores and undergraduate grade-point averages may be found at the Law School Admission Council web site, http://officialguide.lsac.org/docs/cgi-bin/home.asp.

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which is most conducive to speculation, experiment, and creation" and to a "robust exchange of ideas." In fact, diversity-based affirmative action has led to overt racial discrimination in admissions and, for whites, self-censorship on campus. For blacks, it has led to stigma, defensiveness, and self-segregation.

As for the roots of the black educational gap, they remain a matter of dispute. Some experts cling to the view that bigotry—including the "soft bigotry of low expectations"—continues to play a major role, while others point to data showing even wealthy blacks in good schools lagging badly behind whites, and still others believe the problem may be related to culturally-learned attitudes toward education. But one thing is clear: in treating the symptom rather than the source of the problem, the Harvard consensus has perniciously postponed any serious attempt to ameliorate the black performance gap.

With the two University of Michigan cases before it, the Supreme Court has a historic opportunity, perhaps its best since *Brown* v. *Board of Education* in 1954, to uphold the Constitution's promise of color-blind treatment and simultaneously lead the nation forward on the question of race. Some of the country's most distinguished educators are urging the Court to protect an obsolete and damaging status quo. One can only hope that at least five Justices have the courage to disappoint them.

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Castro's Gambit

Mark Falcoff

THE SUDDEN arrest in April of several score Cuban human-rights activists, dissidents, independent journalists, and librarians, followed rapidly by their sentencing to long terms in prison and, only a few days later, by the summary execution of three men who had attempted to hijack a ferry to Florida—all this has served to remind us that quite apart from China, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Zimbabwe, Fidel Castro's police state in the Caribbean remains one of the world's most repressive regimes.

Given the fact that these events occurred at the very moment when both the media and American foreign policy were focused almost wholly on Iraq, they might seem to have been purposely timed to take advantage of the world's momentary distraction. In fact, however, Castro's actions may have been motivated by precisely the opposite consideration: namely, a desire to make sure that he was not being forgotten. As one of the regime's highest ranking defectors remarked to me at the time, "this creates a crisis, the thing Fidel likes best." Lending credibility to this interpretation was the fact that the arrests and executions coincided with the annual sitting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, thus giving a resolution against Cuba a much higher-than-usual chance of passing—which it duly did.

The purported justification for the crackdown was that a handful of pro-democracy activists—all of them civilians, and most of them living a precarious existence—were somehow threatening Cuba's "national sovereignty." At the "trials"—closed to foreign diplomats or journalists, and with only the prosecutors and Cuban intelligence agents permitted to speak—the proof of guilt was said to consist in the fact that some of these unfortunates had had the temerity to meet with James Cason, the head of the U.S. interests bureau in Havana, or his staff. They not only had allegedly received books and short-wave radios from these persons but also—here, supposedly, was the smoking gun—had been allowed to use the mission's fax machine and Internet connection, two items not normally accessible to Cuban civilians.

Needless to say, it is altogether inconceivable that some 70 individuals from many different parts of Cuba, many of them no doubt unknown to each other, could have imperiled the island's established order. Still, currents are running there that warrant a closer look.

MORE THAN a decade after the collapse of its Soviet ally, the regime of Fidel Castro is, in many respects, more powerful than ever before. This is due in part to a new investment law that has made possible joint ventures with foreign partners

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(Canadian, Mexican, and European) and opened the island to as much as $2 billion a year in foreign tourism. It is also due in part to virtual gifts of oil from the Cuban dictator's new best friend, Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez.

At the same time, having legalized the possession of U.S. currency, Cuba is now receiving millions of dollars annually in remittances from Cuban-Americans and other Cubans living abroad. Since no Cuban (with very few exceptions) can start a business of his own on the island, recipients of this money have no choice but to spend it on consumer items, available at special stores established by the regime to vacuum up far more than the lion's share of the profits. (Television sets, for example, are sold at roughly three times the price they would fetch in nearby Haiti or the Dominican Republic.) Finally, immigration accords reached with the United States in 1994 have committed Washington to take 20,000 unhappy Cubans off Castro's hands each year. Whereas the stated purpose of this arrangement is to prevent uncontrolled migration and discourage Cubans from setting sail on makeshift rafts, an added effect has been to neuter any potential political opposition: many discontented individuals, instead of channeling their unhappiness into a demand for change, simply leave.

Nor does Castro's power rest on these advantages alone. Cubans are subject to one of the world's most advanced systems of political repression, brought to perfection by masters of the art: Soviets, East Germans, and, latterly, Vietnamese. Schools and media are rigorously censored; "uncooperative" citizens can lose their ration cards; demonstrations of ideological orthodoxy remain a prerequisite for access to higher education or a government sinecure; thanks to numerous bizarre regulations forcing virtually everyone to violate some law just to survive, the regime can "legally" impose criminal sanctions on any citizen at will.

Secret police and intelligence services also remain omnipresent in Cuba, as do the notorious neighborhood block committees (the so-called Committees for the Defense of the Revolution). Civil society, or rather "civil society," has been thoroughly organized along Communist lines, so that every civic element is now integrated into one or another series of "revolutionary" institutions. And where coercion fails, still another factor works to preserve the power of the seventy-six-year-old Castro: a subtly encouraged fear of the moment, presumably not far distant, when he himself will no longer be on the scene to assure his people of their impending "victory" over the United States.

Under these circumstances, one might ask why there is any opposition in Cuba at all—even the anemic kind typified by those now facing prison sentences of twenty years or more. The answer lies in several developments that lurk just beneath the surface but that do not always receive proper attention by foreign observers.

First is the blowback created by the legalization of the dollar. While this has certainly proved beneficial to a regime starved for hard currency, it has also introduced new and troubling fissures into Cuban society. Until fairly recently, and with the exception of a handful of high-ranking party officials and military officers, Cuban life was distinguished by a radical kind of equality—equality, of course, at a very low level. Moreover, there was only one way to improve one's lot in society: by demonstrating conspicuous loyalty to the regime, from which all blessings flowed.

Now, however, those lucky enough to have remittance-paying relatives abroad are significantly better off than their neighbors. Nor do such individuals invariably need to be well-viewed by the authorities to have achieved this status. An added nasty twist is that most of those with relatives in exile are "white"; the 50 percent or more of Cuba's population that is black enjoys no such advantage.

A second potential cause of unrest is the sharp decline in Cuba's already pitiful living standards. Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of oil-for-sugar barter arrangements, the island has experienced a precipitous drop in its gross national product. By some estimates, the economy hit bottom in 1994-95 and has made a modest recovery since then; but it is still far from the socialist "prosperity," such as it was, of the 1970's and 80's, when Cuba was receiving a subsidy from the Soviet Union estimated at roughly $6 billion a year. And no less devastating has been the disappearance of Moscow's satellite states in Eastern Europe. Most of Cuba's motor vehicles and much of its industrial machinery, including the equipment in its sugar mills, came from East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and spare parts for all these machines—inferior things in any case—are exceedingly hard to find.

Since the mid-90's, Cuba's capital stocks have likewise been sharply depleted and show no signs of being replaced. Last year it was announced that almost half the country's sugar mills would be closed, releasing more than 100,000 workers from their traditional employment. The government declared they would be retrained—though it did not specify at what.

It would be hard to exaggerate the significance

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of the island's fall as a major producer of sugar: for over a century and a half, this has been Cuba's most important export. At fault has been not only the serious decline in the industry's physical plant but a diminution of the world's appetite for the one thing Cuba is uniquely favored by nature to produce. In 1959, on the eve of Castro's rise to power, Cuba enjoyed privileged access to the vast U.S. sugar market: it was the beneficiary of a quota of more than a fourth of our domestic consumption, at subsidized prices. Since the end of that arrangement in 1960, the old quota has been divided among 44 countries. Meanwhile, however, more than 100 other nations have started to dump sugar on the world market, and, no less ominously, artificial corn-based sweeteners have come to replace cane-based sugar in such major products as soft drinks, candy bars, and baked goods. As if this were not troubling enough, sugar from Mexico will, under the NAFTA agreements, enter the United States duty-free after 2008.

IN THEORY, tourism could replace sugar as Cuba's chief source of hard currency—indeed, it has already done so. But tourism by itself will never produce anything like the level of prosperity Cuba enjoyed under the U.S. economic umbrella from 1901 to 1959 or even during the term of its membership in the Soviet commonwealth of nations from 1960 to 1991, when positive trade balances were secured and underwritten by a politico-military alliance.

There are several reasons for this. Since so little of value is produced on the island, most of what the tourist industry needs to sustain itself—including food—has to be imported. This is itself not an unusual situation in the Caribbean: according to official figures, Barbados, for example, manages to retain a mere nineteen cents out of every dollar entering that country. Although Cuba claims to keep 22 cents, that seems unlikely: in contrast to Barbados, it does not possess a small business class or a significant private agricultural sector to supply at least some goods and services. And even if the Cuban figure were correct, the island would have to gross more than $30 billion a year in order to replicate its former annual Soviet subsidy of $6 billion—a flatly impossible task. Mexico, which possesses a far more sophisticated infrastructure and boasts a vastly greater menu of attractions than Cuba, grosses $10 billion from tourism in a good year.

While the tourist industry has unquestionably provided a much-needed source of economic oxygen for the regime, it has also introduced new distortions into Cuban life. To anyone visiting the island, the most striking of these is the geometric growth in prostitution of both sexes. Another is the invidious comparisons that Cubans are now in a position to make between their own situation and that of ordinary tourists not only from European countries but from nearby Latin nations like Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, not to mention the thousands of Cuban-Americans who are permitted under U.S. law to visit their families once a year. (Many, ignoring U.S. restrictions, visit as often as they like by traveling through third countries.) At the same time, Cuba's vaunted health-care system, which foreign visitors never fail to praise (often without actually bothering to visit a clinic or hospital), has been completely reoriented toward offering sophisticated services, including plastic surgery, to foreigners who can pay in dollars. Not surprisingly, clinics servicing ordinary Cubans often lack medicines, bandages, syringes, and other basics.*

Since tourism—the only dynamic sector of the economy—can provide employment for only a tiny percentage of the Cuban work force, it has threatened to create a kind of worker's aristocracy (to use a Marxist term). The regime claims to have mitigated this danger by requiring all foreign enterprises, including many hotels and other tourist services, to hire personnel from a pool provided by the government, to which the foreign employers must also consign wages. The government then typically pays these workers at a rate of about a tenth of what they would earn in a free-market economy, with the remainder being transferred to what it calls *prestaciones sociales*—that is, social services like free education, free health care, etc. It requires quite a stretch of the imagination to believe that the full 90 percent is being allocated to good works and that the Communist party, the army, and the police are not first taking their own hefty shares.

SIMILARLY CONTRIBUTING to discontent, and thus to the nascent human-rights movement, is the emergence of a privileged class associated simultaneously with the armed forces and with the

* Typically, foreign visitors are told that the reason for this is the U.S. trade embargo. (One visitor who swallowed the Cuban line whole was Bernard Cardinal Law, until recently the Roman Catholic archbishop of Boston.) In fact, however, there is no embargo on the sale of medical products to Cuba, though there is a requirement for end-use monitoring to make sure that what is transferred does not end up either in special hospitals reserved for the Communist-party elite and high-ranking military and police officials and their families or in the clinics that sell their services to foreigners for hard currency.

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Castro family. The tourist industry is itself now administered by members of the military, both active and retired. Its chief is General Raúl Castro, the dictator's younger brother and designated successor. In brief, what we are witnessing in Cuba is an incipient alliance between thuggish colonels and unscrupulous foreign investors—an alliance similar in structure, though not in formal ideology, to those that once characterized Papa Doc's Haiti, Anastasio Somoza's Nicaragua, and Rafael Trujillo's Dominican Republic.

The resemblance to these old-style dictatorships goes deeper still. The Castro regime is increasingly becoming a family affair. Aside from Raúl, another brother, Ramón, serves as the liaison to potential foreign investors, and many members of the extended Castro family are now in charge of key ministries, particularly those involved in joint ventures with foreign companies. We know a bit more about at least some of these characters ever since, in recent months, the Cuban media broke decades of silence in matters pertaining to Fidel Castro's personal life by publishing profiles of two of his five (or possibly six) sons, a nuclear physicist and a surgeon. The former, Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, is Soviet-trained and was formerly the head of the Cuban Atomic Energy Commission. Physically he bears a stunning resemblance to his father in his glory days, right down to the beard. In light of the fact that General Raúl Castro's health is supposed to be more precarious than that of his dictator brother, some dissidents are beginning to wonder whether these recent disclosures are meant to prepare the way for a "North Korean" or "Syrian" scenario of biological succession.

But if such family dictatorships are hardly unknown in the circum-Caribbean, none has ever claimed to represent the vanguard of a new social system or to herald a revolutionary era of equality and social justice. Nor has any claimed the mantle of Communism or socialism. It is this divide—between the government's formal identity and what one might call the "Somozist" facts on the ground—that has aroused dissidence most particularly within the Communist party itself.

The ranks of the pro-democracy movement in Cuba are increasingly being filled by people like Elizardo Sánchez, now the head of the independent Cuban Commission on Human Rights. These are defectors who once shared the regime's vision but have at long last come to feel betrayed by it. Especially troubling to Fidel Castro must be the growth within this opposition of a true social-democratic tendency that—whatever one may think of its ultimate relevance to Cuba's political culture—can hardly be tarred with the brush of association with the United States or the Miami exile community.

What, then, of the future? In the near and perhaps even the medium term, Fidel Castro has nothing to worry about. His control of the island is all but absolute, and he enjoys a remarkable degree of support in the foreign press and in the so-called international community—Syria, China, Iran, North Korea, South Africa, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Vietnam, Algeria *e tutti quanti*. He remains a hero to those Americans—they are not few in our academic, cultural, and entertainment communities—who despise their own government or country. He has turned his island into a movie set for the delectation of Latin Americans, Africans, Arabs, and Asians who dream of spitting in the face of the United States themselves but are unwilling to bear the cost.

In the long run, however, his country's future is very problematic indeed. Modern Cuba has been "invented" three times—once as a Spanish colony, once as an American protectorate, once as a Soviet ally and satellite. Today, its entire national identity is based on its being the most aggressive and intransigent enemy of the United States at the United Nations and in the so-called nonaligned movement. But countries, even very small and unimportant ones, cannot survive on rhetoric and resolutions alone. What role can Cuba possibly assume after Fidel Castro is gone?

Increasingly bereft of resources and markets, with a tourist industry of rather limited potential, with most of its ambitious young people hoping or planning to emigrate, Cuba has been forced to mortgage its future to the proposition that an end to the U.S. trade embargo will suddenly render workable an economic system—Communism—that has failed everywhere else on the globe. That proposition is doubtful in the extreme; but neither, so far, has any other come along to replace it. This is only one of the many issues troubling the handful of Cubans courageous enough in recent weeks and months to challenge the system frontally. Behind bars for long terms—many of them in solitary confinement—they will, alas, have ample opportunity for reflection.

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OBSERVATIONS

Bringing Up Parents

Kay S. Hymowitz

ARE AMERICAN parents nuts? Sometimes it seems like it. A friend recently told me of a young acquaintance, the mother of a two-year-old girl, who was seriously considering not having a second child because bringing a new baby into the house would, as she put it, "hurt my daughter's self-esteem." In the locker room of a gym, I once watched a young woman dressing her baby after a swim. "Here is your shirt," she said. "It's a pink shirt. I'm putting the shirt on your left arm. Now I'm putting it on your right arm. Here are your socks. I'm putting the sock on your left foot. Now I'm putting the sock on your right foot. Here are your pants." And so on. The baby attending this lecture sucked on the towel draped over her mother's shoulder and studied a patch of peeling paint on the wall.

Weird as these behaviors may be, they cannot be blamed on simple ignorance. To the contrary, there seems to be a strong correlation between the number of years people have spent at a university and the number of loopy notions they hold about how to raise children. Many of the notions derive, in fact, from books on child-rearing, which parents and would-be parents now purchase by the library-full—five times as many in 1997 as in 1975.

A search of "parenting" books on Amazon yields over *23,000* entries. Here one finds titles devoted to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, "your ten-year-old," "your ten-to-14-year-old," "your teenager," the first three months week-by-week, the first twelve months, the first six years, the "roller-coaster years," the tween years, the teen years, the college years. There are books about the "sensitive child," the "anxious child," the "spirited," "anorexic," "gifted," "late-talking," "explosive," "out-of-sync," "thumb-sucking," "shy," "defiant," "willful," "right-brained," and "psychic" child. Then there are specialized how-to manuals on nursing, infant massage (a recent fad for "de-stressing" babies), feeding, soothing, sleeping, toilet training, playing with your baby, buying the right toys for your toddler, finding the right story books for your preschooler, building your baby's brain, setting limits for your teenager, teaching manners, cultivating "social IQ" and "emotional intelligence," preparing for a new brother or sister, and talking about (at a tome apiece) feelings, fears, adoption, God, money, and sex.

This is not the first generation of Americans to tie themselves in knots over an activity that the vast majority of our species has managed to perform fairly successfully without cracking a single book. The truth is, we have been neurotic about child-rearing for at least the past century. In 1913 the writer Randolph Bourne, observing "a complete bewilderment on the part of the modern parent," scoffed at the "timorousness" that was leading mothers to attend clubs organized by the public schools in order to teach them how to bring up their children. The "greatest generation" may have defeated Nazi Germany and imperial Japan in World War II, but they went weak at the knees when it came to facing down a five-

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year-old who balked at eating his meatloaf. "In no other country has there been so pervasive a cultural anxiety about the rearing of children," one expert commented in the 1950's. Dr. Spock began *Baby and Child Care* (first edition 1946) by patting nervous parental hands—"Trust yourself: You know more than you think you do"—but his famous words failed to make a dent in the near-universal distress.

Two new books, Ann Hulbert's *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children** and Peter N. Stearns's *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America*,† tackle the question of why parental angst is so much a part of the modern American character. Hulbert, the author of a highly regarded biography of Jean Stafford, offers a thorough history of the literature on child-rearing, linking much parental nail-biting to the rise of white-coated "scientific" experts whose self-assurance has long served as a rebuke to the supposed amateurism of ordinary mothers and fathers. Stearns, the editor of the *Journal of Social History* and the author of numerous books on American culture, traces our problems to a different source. As he sees it, 20th-century Americans went wrong when they rejected the sturdy image of youth found in the books of writers like Louisa May Alcott and Laura Ingalls Wilder, choosing instead an idea of children as vulnerable dependents who require classes to bolster their tender psyches and a panoply of protective gear for their fragile bodies. Neither one of these books is likely to reassure today's addled parents, but together they have many an instructive tale to tell.

FOR MOST of our history, parents in the U.S., like parents everywhere else, relied on religious and cultural tradition for lessons on how to bring up Dick and Jane. But as the 19th century merged into the 20th, Americans became increasingly convinced that science, with its systematic observations and efficient methods, could better organize a whole range of human activities, including child-rearing. A new generation of doctors and scholars, influenced by Darwin and William James, set out to conquer what they saw as the uneducated instinct, irrational folkways, and Victorian sentimentality that made parents ineffective and even harmful.

In Hulbert's telling, these scientists were not exactly dispassionate technicians. Many were utopian social engineers, convinced that they were assisting in the creation of what G. Stanley Hall, one of the most eminent of the early psychologists and a teacher of John Dewey, called a "superanthropoid." "The very meaning and mission of childhood is the continuous progress of humanity," one speaker at an 1899 mothers' convention pronounced. Feeding the urgency of the new field of "child study" were the poor immigrant children then beginning to fill American cities and schools. In response to their needs, progressive philanthropists like John D. Rockefeller took up the banner of child psychology, a subject that, in short order, spawned institutions like the Bank Street College of Education and Columbia University's Teachers College, prompted the creation of new government agencies, and colonized the mass media.

Why did Americans so hungrily seize on the experts' ideas, even those that flew in the face of deep-rooted traditions and, in some cases, common sense? Hulbert and Stearns point to a range of far-reaching social factors. First were demographic shifts that were transforming the domestic arrangements of young parents. With the move into big cities from farms or (in the case of immigrants) from abroad, women increasingly found themselves isolated from the network of mothers, aunts, and grandmothers who in the past had handed down female wisdom about infant care. Adding to the clout of the experts was, in the case of the middle class, growing affluence: more mothers had time to become obsessive about their children, an unthinkable luxury for poor and rural women preoccupied with necessities.

The experts also appealed to the public's fascination with being "modern." In particular, scientists found an eager audience among increasingly well-educated females, middle-class women enamored of the notion that they were raising their children in partnership with up-to-date professionals. In this connection, the supposedly outmoded ideas of the previous generation became a subject for eye-rolling. In 1917, one authority only half-jokingly proposed titling a chapter of his book, "The Elimination of the Grandmother." According to a 1940 poll cited by Stearns, the majority of parents believed it vital to raise their children differently from how they themselves had been raised. This result would no doubt hold today as well.

Fueling the steady need for a feeling of up-to-dateness has been the regularity with which child-care experts have claimed to make ever new, breakthrough discoveries. Throughout the 20th century there was a constant flow: new categories of childhood, new promises, new fields of specialty. In 1904, G. Stanley Hall published a two-volume treatise on "adolescence" that among other things introduced the word itself into everyday parlance. By the 1920's, experts had come up with terms like "preschooler" and "toddler," each accompanied by its own theories and recommended techniques. Our own day's contribution to progress has been the unearthing of such heretofore unknown creatures as "tweens" and "emerging adults."

Sociological pressures aside, one very good reason that so many parents embraced modern theory is

* Knopf, 450 pp., $27.50.

† New York University Press, 256 pp., $29.95.

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that it was saving young lives. At the end of the 19th century, more than one in six children died before the age of five. Luther Emmett Holt, the first pediatrician with a national reputation (pediatrics having emerged as a medical specialty only in 1880), came to prominence in part because of his work developing safer formulas for infant nutrition. He helped to save an incalculable number of babies from the "wasting diseases" that still kill millions in Third World countries. It was a great sign of medical progress when, by World War II, accidents had replaced disease as the leading cause of death among children.

Stearns seems to find it suspect that parental worries increased during this same period, but it actually makes perfect sense. As medical progress gave people a growing sense of control over their children's fates, worry replaced fatalism—all in all, a healthy development. But the fast pace of technological change also added to the sense that modern life itself was a danger to children's health. Parents had known for centuries that they had to protect their children from falling down wells or into fireplaces; the 20th century introduced a slew of new hazards, from electrical outlets and automobiles to junk food and, lately, the Internet.

STILL, WHATEVER genuine contributions the experts may have made to children's well-being, even a casual perusal of the history of child-rearing expertise in the U.S. leads ineluctably to the conclusion that parents have often been as gullible as their three-year-olds. As Hulbert points out, the number of expert "findings" grounded in rigorous science has been small, and even in those few cases it has been difficult if not impossible to translate the findings into practical advice. The result has been a catalogue of the faddish, the fantastic, and the contradictory.

Parents have been informed in no uncertain terms that babies should cry 15 to 30 minutes a day for "exercise"; that they should never play with a baby younger than four months; that "rattle behavior" develops in 53 distinct stages; and so forth. Opinion has fluctuated wildly on something so basic as maternal affection toward newborns. Hulbert uncovers a popular 1920's book—ghostwritten by, of all people, H.L. Mencken—whose first chapter, titled "Slaughter of the Innocents," chastises mothers for lavishing too much fondness on their infants ("Kissing a baby after it has been fed . . . is very likely to cause it to vomit"). Later experts were quite sure of the contrary, warning mothers that failure to show affection would cause poor neural circuitry, depression, even autism.

Authorities have been similarly erratic on the subject of stimulation. At the beginning of the 20th century, Luther Emmett Holt advised parents not to play with their babies. "Undue stimulation," he wrote, could be harmful "in these days of factory and locomotive whistles, trolley cars and automobiles, music boxes and the numberless mechanical toys in the nursery, door-bells and telephones in the house." By the 50's, as Stearns notes in one of his more compelling chapters, parents began to fret about their children's boredom. This worry has grown into such a mania that even little babies are now subjected to nonstop entertainment—mobiles, stuffed animals, baby gyms, crib mirrors, Mozart tapes, Baby Einstein videos, etc. But not so fast: an article just published in *Science*, too late to be included in either book, echoes Holt's admonitions, raising the possibility that the noise of modern life is contributing to "auditory and language-related developmental delays."

Perhaps the most powerful testimony to the credulity of American parents is the remarkable career of the behaviorist psychologist John Broadus Watson (1878-1958). Watson's biography alone should have kept him out of polite scientific company, not to mention middle-class nurseries. The son of a fierce Baptist mother and an alcoholic father who abandoned his family, Watson was a troubled and angry boy, arrested on more than one occasion for violent behavior. Even after finishing college and beginning his career, he remained a self-involved and bitter man, his interest in Pavlov's manipulative theories and experiments perfectly fitting his compulsive personality.

Yet none of this stopped Watson from becoming the nation's most renowned child psychologist of the 1920's. His popular *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* combined rants against clueless mothers with minute instructions for training children to behave like rats in a maze. The book begins with a description of a train ride during which Watson was compelled to witness a boy receiving no fewer than 32 kisses from the women around him. Such displays, Watson argued, sprang not from real affection but from female self-indulgence, even perhaps from a need for sexual titillation. "Mother love is a dangerous instrument," he wrote in one passage, and in another: "Parents today are incompetent. Most of them should be indicted for psychological murder." Yet these same parents bought Watson's book in huge numbers, and no less an eminence than Bertrand Russell was an admirer.

Is it necessary to add that the "scientific" experts to whom Americans turned for advice were often failures at raising their own children? John Broadus Watson's sons tried to commit suicide, one of them successfully. The sons of both G. Stanley Hall and Benjamin Spock were deeply alienated from their fathers. After attempting to follow the advice of the mid-century psychologist Arnold Gesell, his own daughter-in-law finally notified him that "frankly, science is

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nothing to me when compared to a few minutes more sleep." Many an honest mother, and father, will echo these sentiments.

Have we all been duped? Are we worrying far too much? Stearns, whose book is less a conventional history than an analysis of the social trope of the "vulnerable child," would have us think so. The black-and-white jacket of *Anxious Parents* sports a grimacing, horror-struck woman whose stylized appearance suggests the panic of a more naive age.

Stearns is certainly right that there is reason for skepticism. Today's unholy alliance between publicity-seeking experts and media outlets eager to attract the soccer moms who control so much household income has created an unwarranted sense of perpetual danger. False charges of sexual abuse by day-care workers, documented and exposed by Dorothy Rabinowitz in *No Crueler Tyrannies*, are one of the more disturbing examples of this phenomenon. But Stearns fails to appreciate the pressures on parents in an open, meritocratic society where their own efforts seem to determine so much about their child's future status. And besides, his portrait of childhood frailty will ring false to anyone who has seen an overworked child of today lugging a 50-pound book bag and carrying a filofax to rival a CEO's.

Hulbert, by contrast, tends to show more sympathy toward the anxious parents of this "disorienting" age, as she calls it. Her fairly straightforward history, including extensive biographical material of some of the bigger names in the expert business, often lacks shape, but it does put forth a thesis. What explains some of the scientific mood swings, she believes, is that experts were trying to answer a genuinely difficult question: how much control or freedom, intimacy or detachment, should adults exercise in preparing a child for modern adulthood? "As children . . . prepare to meet the pressures and the allures of an increasingly materialistic and meritocratic mass society," she writes, "is it more discipline or more bonding that they need at home?" The "hard" spokesmen, like Holt and Watson, "spoke up for authority, discipline, and parental control usually in a blunt father-knows-best tone" while the "soft," like Gesell and to a lesser extent Spock, "urged love, bonding, and children's liberty."

Hulbert is groping toward something here, though without quite grasping it—namely, the degree to which American parental anxiety is itself an outgrowth of American exceptionalism. Unlike parents in more traditional societies, Americans in particular have always been faced with the contradictory and seemingly impossible task of exercising parental authority in order to cultivate in their children a spirit of freedom and autonomy.

From early on, American parents confronted the domestic version of one of the nation's core political dilemmas: how to create free individuals without giving them complete license, or, as we are more likely to hear it phrased today, how to balance individual rights and responsibility. By the early 19th century, ministers and intellectuals who were the child-rearing experts of the time were exhorting parents and teachers to treat children as, in Horace Mann's words, "active, voluntary agents"; in fact, European visitors were struck by the feisty independence (and occasionally insolent egotism) of the children they encountered here. In the 20th century, a new set of social and demographic pressures, many of them cited by both Hulbert and Stearns, exacerbated the tension between adult power and children's freedom. An increasingly pluralistic society could no longer be counted on to endorse parental authority, while children were in need of more venues for developing their creativity and individual talents if they were to take advantage of the new opportunities before them.

Hulbert misses the real point when she divides the experts into "hard" and "soft." As Stearns makes clear in an inadvertent correction to her thesis, what is remarkable in the story of the 20th century is how little *any* of the experts relied on the exercise of age-old patriarchal authority. Seeking to create an "effectively original . . . problem-solving child," the "hard" Watson rejected both physical and emotional punishment. Later experts cast a cold eye on spanking, shaming, and scolding. Yet the growing prevalence of permissive approaches hardly dispelled the peculiarly American problem of how to wield parental authority: it only made it worse.

The history provided by Stearns and Hulbert suggests that parents are unlikely to find the answer to this enduring problem in the advice books they consume in such vast quantities. There is, indeed, no scientific formula for squaring the circle of authority and freedom. But that may help explain why it is that today's educated, striving, upwardly mobile middle-class parents are so worried: they have plenty to worry about.

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MUSIC

The Shy Master

Terry Teachout

NOT ALL great composers are also greatly popular. Some, like Berlioz and Wagner, are so idiosyncratic that their music will probably always exercise a polarizing effect on audiences. Others, like Elgar or Sibelius, are perfectly accessible to their own countrymen but less immediately appealing to listeners whose tastes have been formed in different cultural climates.

Even more puzzling are those composers who are all but worshipped by connoisseurs yet fail to please the public at large. Sometimes their obscurity proves temporary—Gustav Mahler and Erik Satie are perhaps the best-known examples of "composer's composers" who over time have become truly popular—but more often they stay in the shadows, unknown to the many while loved by the few.

Among such figures, few have been so ardently admired and so insufficiently performed as Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). In France, Fauré is regarded as a major master. Elsewhere, however, he is known almost entirely for his *Requiem*, Op. 48 (1887-99), and a handful of songs. Even the two pieces of chamber music that first brought him fame—the A Major Violin Sonata, Op. 13 (1876), and the C Minor Piano Quartet, Op. 15 (1879)—are now heard only infrequently in other countries. Yet his music has been taken up by many non-French artists, including George Balanchine, who made one of his finest ballets, *Emeralds*, to a selection of Fauré's orchestral music, and Aaron Copland, a lifelong Francophile who declared in 1945 that "the true believer in the genius of Fauré is convinced that to hear him is to love him."

To his admirers, Fauré's near-complete failure to thrive outside the French-speaking world has been no surprise. Copland himself went on to say:

> In a world that seems less and less able to order its affairs rationally, Fauré's restraint and classic sense of order may appear slightly incongruous. . . . [O]utside France the public has been slow to appreciate his delicacy, his reserve, his imperturbable calm—qualities that are not easily exportable.

Indeed, such qualities have never gone over well with the average music lover, whether in or out of France. But Fauré's music, for all its surface poise, is in fact anything but imperturbable—it is very often passionate to the highest degree—and to understand why so many listeners find it elusive one must look elsewhere.

FAURÉ, AS I have suggested, was in no way lacking in strong passions. To the contrary, he was unabashedly emotional, intensely ambitious, and subject throughout his life to spells of crippling depression that found their counterpart in the dark undercurrents running through much of his music. He married unwisely and late, then spent the rest of his life seeking solace from other women. Unable to support himself and his family solely by composing, he worked as a church

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organist, a teacher and administrator, even a music critic—the last a particularly thankless chore in the notoriously corrupt journalistic environment of *fin-de-siècle* Paris.

The sixth child of a family whose toehold in the bourgeoisie was tenuous, Fauré was pushed toward a musical career from earliest childhood. His hard-working father, a schoolmaster turned educational bureaucrat, enrolled him as a scholarship boy in a musical boarding school in Paris when he was just nine years old. Fauré would spend the next eleven years at the Ecole de Musique Classique et Religieuse, learning his trade and finding a patron and friend in his most important teacher, the composer Camille Saint-Saëns.

From Saint-Saëns, who had been one of the most awesomely endowed child prodigies in the history of classical music (and in addition appears to have been a discreet homosexual who found young Gabriel attractive), he learned the value of sheer craftsmanship and mastery of traditional form. At the same time, his daily exposure to the plainchant and Renaissance choral music he sang in school made him comfortable with contrapuntal textures and gave him a taste for the modally inflected melodies that would become one of his trademarks.*

Yet Fauré was never a true neoclassicist *à la* Saint-Saëns. From the start of his composing career, romanticism was in his blood, and his first important instrumental works, the A Major Violin Sonata and C Minor Piano Quintet, are large-scale, sweepingly romantic statements that owe as much to the impetuous example of Robert Schumann as to the neat, dapper pieces of Fauré's famous teacher. Also like Schumann, Fauré expressed himself more readily through songs, piano pieces, and chamber music than through the medium of the symphony orchestra, for which he wrote little of consequence, though this was out of choice rather than necessity.† Nor did he have any gift for the theater (his one opera, *Pénélope*, is all but forgotten). He would always remain a lyric poet, making intimate confessions to small audiences.

Fauré's only composition scored for large forces that has entered the international classical-music repertoire is itself an anomaly. The *Requiem*, originally written for chorus and organ-dominated chamber orchestra and only later rewritten for a more conventional ensemble, is completely lacking in high drama. Darkly colored and at all times understated, the Fauré *Requiem* is less a piece of liturgical theater in the spectacular manner of Berlioz or Verdi than a gentle, consoling meditation on the last things.

It was the *Requiem* that pointed the way to Fauré's late style, whose essential qualities, though unmistakably French, are nevertheless "French" in a personal manner that defies easy categorization. For one thing, the mature Fauré never resorts to charm. He is, instead, utterly serious, though never heavy or ponderous, much less sentimental. His instrumental textures are light, even luminescent, with a floating quality that is emphasized by his increasingly radical harmonic language. Though no kind of experimentalist, he became less firmly moored to traditional concepts of tonality, and in such works as the D Minor Trio, Op. 120 (1921), he moves so freely from one harmonic area to another that even the most alert listener may find himself briefly disoriented at times. ("I simply can't get used to never settling down in any key," Saint-Saëns grumbled about these compositions, "to consecutive fifths and sevenths and to chords demanding a resolution that never comes.")

In addition, Fauré's musical personality grew more introverted, no doubt in part because he began to lose his hearing in middle age. The disorder terrified him:

> I'm knocked sideways by this disease which has attacked the very part of me I needed to keep intact. It's disrespectful or, at least, ill-judged to compare myself with Beethoven. But the second half of his life was nothing but despair! There are passages of music and isolated timbres which I simply can't hear at all!

Like Beethoven, Fauré did not need to hear in order to compose—his painstaking early training served him well in that regard—but it seems clear that his gradual detachment from the physical world of sound pushed him in the direction of an austerity and concentration far removed from the Schumann-like expansiveness of his younger years. Still, he never lost touch with his emotions, and in such late pieces as the Nocturne No. 13 in B Minor, Op. 119 (1921), his most powerful work for solo piano, Fauré explored to the fullest an interior world of disillusion and despair.

All this may sound like a recipe for the making of "difficult" music, and it cannot be denied that a few of Fauré's late pieces, in particular the E Minor String Quartet, Op. 121 (1924), his last composition, present real problems of understanding (though they are easier to grasp when performed with the straightforwardness that is invariably appropriate to his music, early or late).** But there is nothing impenetrable about the Thirteenth Nocturne, the D Minor Trio, or any number of other works from the

* The main theme of one of his most popular songs, "*Lydia*," is in the Lydian mode.

† Contrary to popular belief, Fauré was perfectly capable of orchestrating his own music, and he never composed anything more purely beautiful—or frankly sensuous—than the little-known love music he wrote to accompany *Shylock*, Op. 57 (1889), a loose French adaptation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, on which George Balanchine drew for his score to *Emeralds*.

** Fauré never failed to warn the performers with whom he worked that his music should be played briskly and with an absolute minimum of rubato. When the mezzo-soprano Claire Croiza asked him how to sing the popular "*Après un rêve*," he said only: "Without slowing down, without slowing down."

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second half of Fauré's life. To be sure, they demand close attention; but they repay it, too.

IS IT likely that Gabriel Fauré's music will ever speak to a wider audience? Not really. For all its beauties, it lacks a quality normally present in the work of romantic artists: it is not forthcoming. To appreciate Fauré, you must come to him, in the same way that you might open yourself up to a painter like Edouard Vuillard. It is as though you were talking with a shy person whose voice is only audible in a quiet room. If the room is too noisy—or if you insist on doing all the talking—then you will hear nothing at all.

But if you choose instead to listen, closely and carefully? Then you may find yourself responding with the fervor of a Copland or a Marcel Proust, who told Fauré that "I not only admire and venerate your music, I am in love with it" and went so far as to use him as one of the models for Vinteuil, the composer in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. It was a remarkable tribute from one great artist to another. But, then, Fauré had a way of inspiring such tributes. John Singer Sargent painted him. Maurice Ravel studied with him. "I know of no other music which is more purely and uniquely music," said the composer Arthur Honegger, "except, perhaps, that of Mozart or Schubert."

No doubt Fauré himself would have squirmed to hear such talk. When he referred to his art, it was invariably with the balance and moderation of a modest man. Asked how he planned to run the Paris Conservatory, whose directorship he assumed in 1905, he replied:

> I should like to take a line that is both classical and modern, sacrificing neither contemporary practice to hallowed traditions nor traditions to the fashion of the moment.

One might well say the same thing of his own music. It is classical and modern, expansive and inward, contemplative and impassioned—and lovable.

Fauré on CD: A Select Discography

COMPARATIVELY FEW of Fauré's major works were recorded on 78's. It was not until the introduction of the LP that his music came into its own, and even now it is hard to find first-rate recordings of certain lesser-known masterpieces, just as several of the finest performances of the past (like Sir Thomas Beecham's 1959 recording of the *Pavane*, Op. 50, and Gerard Souzay's song recordings of the early 60's) are now out of print. Here are ten important Fauré recordings currently available on CD:

1927: The violinist Thibaud and the pianist Alfred Cortot were the two most admired French instrumental soloists of the 20th century (though they were also well known for their chamber-music performances with the cellist Pablo Casals). Their sharply contrasting yet mysteriously compatible styles can be heard to inimitable effect in the A Major Violin Sonata, coupled on CD with equally persuasive performances of the Debussy and Franck violin sonatas (EMI Classics 63032).

1927-30: Claire Croiza ranked among the very greatest of French vocalists. (In truth, she was the Paris-born daughter of an Irish-American expatriate and his Italian wife.) All of her extremely rare 78's, including unforgettable performances of Fauré's "*Après un rêve*," "*Les berceaux*," "*Clair de lune*," "*Prison*" and "*Soir*," have been collected on a two-CD set available through www.marston-records.com. It is a priceless document of prewar French singing at its most subtle and refined (Marston 52018-2, two CD's).

1937: Fauré was drawn to the French voice type known as the *baryton-martin*, a high baritone with an easy, heady top. *L'Horizon chimérique*, Op. 113 (1921), his last song cycle, was written for the baritone Charles Panzéra, a much-admired exponent of the French *mélodie* whose "creator recording" of this work is sung with a matchless blend of vigor, cultivation, and finesse. On the same CD is Panzéra's 1936 recording of *La bonne chanson*, Op. 61 (1894), Fauré's great cycle on texts by Verlaine (Dutton CDBP 9726).

1959: Robert Casadesus, Cortot's successor as the outstanding French pianist of the postwar era, performed and recorded numerous duets and works for two pianos with his wife Gaby, including a wonderfully fresh version of *Dolly*, Op. 56 (1896), Fauré's delightful children's suite, currently available as part of the Casadesus volume in the *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* series (Philips 456 739-2PM2, two CD's).

1970: Arthur Rubinstein recorded the C Minor Piano Quintet twice, the second time with the then-new Guarneri Quartet, a performance that shows both the pianist and his much younger colleagues at their most warmly communicative (RCA Red Seal 09026-63074-2).

1975-78: The French pianist Jean-Philippe Collard recorded Fauré's complete chamber music with piano in the 70's, and these long-unavailable performances are now being

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reissued on CD. The first volume contains the D Minor Trio, the complete sonatas for violin and cello, and shorter pieces for both instruments, all heard in elegant yet rhythmically direct performances that also feature the violinist Augustin Dumay and the cellist Frédéric Lodeon (EMI Classics 69261, two CD's).

1976: Late in his life, Vladimir Horowitz began playing the Thirteenth Nocturne in public, and made a live recording that conveys all the anguish of that profoundly unsettling work (RCA Victor Gold Seal 60377-2-RG).

1986: George Balanchine's *Emeralds* (the first panel of *Jewels*, his 1967 triptych of plotless ballets) is set to the choreographer's own sequence of instrumental excerpts from Fauré's incidental music for *Shylock* and Maurice Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Op. 80 (1898). This highly effective eight-movement suite has been recorded by Robert Irving and the New York City Ballet Orchestra as part of *A Balanchine Album*, which contains the scores to four of Balanchine's best-known ballets (Nonesuch 79135, two CD's).

1987: Matthew Best leads the Corydon Singers and the English Chamber Orchestra in a restrained yet deeply felt performance of the *Requiem*. It has now been recoupled on CD with a similarly effective version of Maurice Duruflé's haunting 1947 *Requiem*, itself composed in homage to Fauré's masterpiece (Hyperion CDA67070).

1992: The best available anthology of Fauré's most popular songs (including "*Après un rêve*" and "*Lydia*") is by the contralto Nathalie Stutzmann and the pianist Catherine Collard (RCA Victor Red Seal 09026-61439-2).

Except as indicated, these CD's can all be purchased online by viewing this article during the month of June on Commentary's website:
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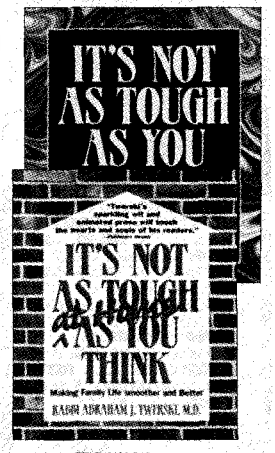

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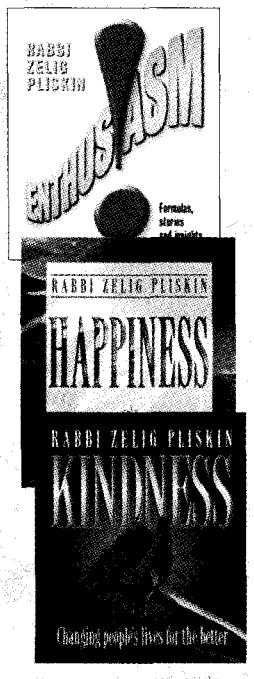

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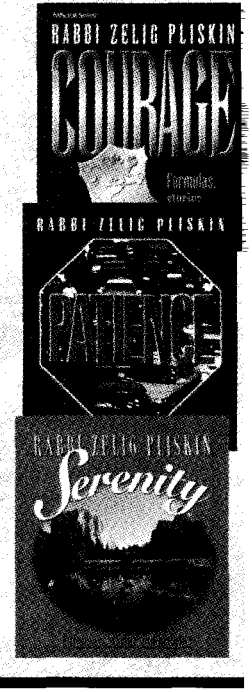

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Books in Review

Good Cop, Bad Cop

The Challenge of Crime: Rethinking Our Response
by Henry Ruth and Kevin R. Reitz
Harvard. 374 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
James Q. Wilson

THIS BOOK offers many sensible, thoughtful suggestions on specific issues related to crime. Its authors call attention to some interesting crime-prevention and crime-reduction policies, accurately criticize certain antidrug programs like DARE and boot camps, and properly oppose the current tendency to convert every street crime into a federal offense.

Why, then, do I not like *The Challenge of Crime* as much as I should? Anyone reading it would immediately answer by pointing out that the authors are critical of me. But let me struggle, as best I can, to overcome that explanation. First of all, scholars regularly beat up on each other; that is how we earn our living, and I have been hit by much tougher authors than these. Second, Ruth and Reitz actually say some nice things about me on the way toward adopting their general view that I am a social menace.

My discomfort with this book arises from a different direction. Ruth and Reitz—the former has held several criminal-justice positions in the federal government, the latter teaches law at the University of Colorado—want to take control of what they think of as the sensible middle ground of crime policy, abjuring the ideological arguments of conservatives and liberals alike. That is a good idea, provided they can find the middle ground. To do so, they must first reject the ideologues, which is where I come in. I am the Stereotypical Conservative: my 1973 book, *Thinking About Crime*, although "brilliant" and "sophisticated," argues in favor of a "conservative crime-response program" for which I am an "apologist."

Unfortunately, Ruth and Reitz do not identify a Stereotypical Liberal, though they do speak vaguely of a "liberal" tendency to favor rehabilitation, indeterminate sentencing laws, and court rules that make it tougher to convict offenders. It is true enough that some liberals (as well as some conservatives) have favored these policies, just as some conservatives (as well as some liberals) have favored sending criminals to prison. But public policy toward crime has moved away from those starkly stated views. In fact, what Ruth and Reitz have found is not the middle ground but a slightly revised liberal position about crime. It is liberalism purged of some (but not all) of its extreme claims.

THERE WERE two main issues in the 1970's when I first wrote about crime. The first involved the rival claims of, on the one hand, economists who believed that crime could be deterred by means of sanctions and, on the other hand, sociologists who believed that criminals could be rehabilitated. That tension still exists, but in general the economists have won. *Thinking About Crime* was conceived by me as

JAMES Q. WILSON *is the author most recently of* The Marriage Problem: How Our Culture Has Weakened Families. *His articles in* COMMENTARY *on crime and public policy include "What To Do About Crime" (September 1994).*

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an effort to deter rehabilitation and rehabilitate deterrence.

At the time, I did not have a lot to go on; there were only two or three decent studies of deterrence, all supportive, and several articles criticizing rehabilitation. Drawing on my understanding of human nature, I was convinced that deterrence would have a greater influence than rehabilitation, though I also thought that some programs of rehabilitation would work for some people; in the second edition of *Thinking About Crime*, I discussed those possibilities.

Since the time I wrote, there have been many more studies of both deterrence and rehabilitation. Despite the important technical problems involved in estimating the precise effects of deterrence—highlighted in a report by the National Academy of Science—it is now widely understood to work in a significant way. As for rehabilitation programs, their effect has been shown to be, on average, rather small.

Ruth and Reitz hardly mention deterrence. But they do spend a lot of time on rehabilitation, so much so as to leave the impression that this is the path to follow. It is as if the intellectual and policy arguments of the 1970's and 1980's had never occurred. They also criticize incapacitation—that is, reducing crime simply by taking offenders off the street—and many of their objections are quite sound. But they say little about deterring people from committing crime in the first place.

IF THE first issue in the 1970's was deterrence vs. rehabilitation, the second issue was prevention—specifically, whether society could prevent crime by locating and fixing its "root causes." I believed that such an effort was pointless. We did not have a very good idea what those causes were, and with respect to those that might exist, there were no programs that could significantly moderate their effects.

Ruth and Reitz seem to think that, in the 1970's, criminologists were generally in favor of cutting crime by improving the economy, and that I am at fault for having resisted this view. But criminologists did not then write about economic improvement as a cure for crime. The leading causal theories were these: that crime was learned through association with other criminals; that it represented a repudiation of middle-class life; that it was picked up from parents; and that it resulted from a desire for money combined with an inability to earn it. Scholars identifying these diverse "causes" were, for the most part, quite candid in saying that they did not know how to correct them.

I sympathized with their predicament. How do you teach boys not to learn crime from other boys (and how did those other boys learn crime to begin with)? If middle-class culture is to blame, do we abolish it? If crime is absorbed from parents, how can government teach parents to do a better job? What exactly differentiates boys who want money but cannot figure out how to earn it from the vast majority who find that earning money is not very hard?

Since 1973, we have learned a great deal more about why certain individuals are more likely than others to commit crime. We now know that some biological factors, including intelligence and impulsiveness, are at work, as are many environmental ones, such as single-parent or discordant families and a weak sense of neighborhood cohesiveness. Although it is still hard to say what to do with this new knowledge, helpful experiments have suggested the value of certain ideas. Among them are nurse visitations for young unwed mothers and the guidance supplied by Big Brother and Big Sister programs.

One thing we have *not* learned since 1973, however, is that rising unemployment pushes up crime rates. The economy may play a small role, but it is so small as to be almost unmeasurable.

Ruth and Reitz pay no attention to these findings, though they do acknowledge the value of some experimental crime-prevention programs. When they treat the causes of crime, it is by means of convoluted, throwaway comments, instructing us (for example) not to think that the "assumed" moral chaos of parents "has nothing to do with economic poverty"—the insinuation being that economic factors may be the culprit to look for after all. It would be nice if their book, with its 69 pages of notes, had contained a reference to the empirical work done by scholars like Sarah McLanahan and Robert Sampson showing that, independently of parental income and even race, single-parent families contribute significantly to delinquency. It would be even nicer if the authors had taken a hard look at the findings of Philip Cook, Richard Freeman, and Peter Reuter on the effect of low incomes on crime. It would be nicer still if they considered the summary of the evidence that the late Richard Herrnstein and I presented in *Crime and Human Nature* (1985). And it would be a great kindness if they had quoted me accurately on the poverty-crime link, about which I was quite agnostic. But no.

INSTEAD OF all this, what Ruth and Reitz emphasize is that America relies too much on prisons, is deficient in enacting gun-control programs, and ought to be kinder to drug dealers. They also complain about racial profiling and so-called "zero tolerance" policing. Here, then, we may at last have discovered the Liberal Stereotype to counterbalance me. It is Ruth and Reitz.

An entire chapter of *The Challenge of Crime* is devoted to prisons as the "conservative" response to crime. (Since the overwhelming majority of Americans support the use of prisons, I suppose they are all conservatives.) Prisons can certainly be overused, as they are in the case of many arrested for crack cocaine; but

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one cannot hold that imprisonment is wrong without discussing deterrence, which, as I have already noted, Ruth and Reitz barely do. Their negligence is especially odd since the British scholar David Farrington has published several articles suggesting that our use of prison helps explain why the burglary rate in the United States, once higher than England's, is now so much lower. Indeed, victim surveys show that burglary is less common in the United States than in Australia, Canada, England, and New Zealand, and that except for homicide, the rate for almost *every* major crime is lower here than it is in England.

One reason Ruth and Reitz dislike incarceration is that it is supported by people who—mistakenly, in their view—believe the Uniform Crime Reports, a source compiled by the FBI from data reported to the police. Instead, they prefer the victim surveys conducted by the Census Bureau. But those valuable surveys, which did not begin until 1973, have their own faults. For example, they undercount assaults, and they do not count crimes against businesses.

The simple fact is that neither the one source nor the other is correct on every point; taken together, however, they provide as good a view of crime as we are likely to have. And on one matter they are both quite clear: during the 1970's, crime rates, however measured, rose rapidly. It is relatively unimportant to know the exact magnitude of the increase; it is more important to know that in those years the public was right to fear crime. If prison rates began to rise as well, that was not the result of a misplaced trust in a flawed source of data but in response to a very real increase in crime.

Ruth and Reitz also attack aggressive policing, finding especially bad examples of it in New York City's "quality of life" campaign under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and in the emergence all over the country of racial profiling. If by racial profiling we mean using race as the

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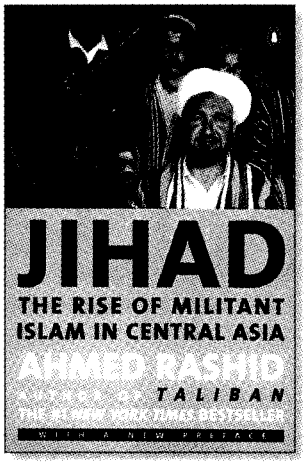

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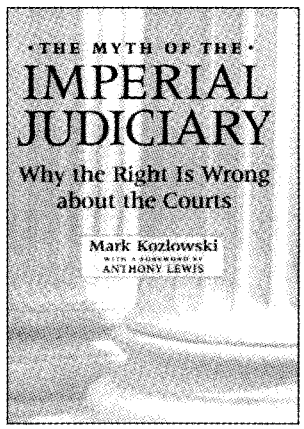

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only or even the chief reason for stopping a person, clearly it is wrong. But if African Americans are stopped more frequently than whites because they are more likely to commit crime, then race is a factor, but not the decisive factor, in the stop. There is a world of difference between the two.

I wish we knew how often bad profiling has occurred and how often tolerable profiling has occurred, but we do not. We need serious inquiries (at least one has been done in Sacramento, California), not popular headline-grabbers. The police have to separate the indefensible from the tolerable, but they do not get much help from writers who claim that if blacks are more likely to be stopped for speeding than whites, then the police are by definition doing a lousy job.

The questions to be asked in any comparative study are obvious. How much faster than the speed limit are people in each group driving? How old are the drivers? How many look like possible suspects? What information, if any, do the police have about people wanted for crimes, people on probation and parole, people suspected of drug trafficking? Since Ruth and Reitz, like the authors they cite, have resolutely declined to interview the police themselves, we are left with the impression that today's cops are all racist monsters. I find that hard to believe.

AT THE end of a favorable review, many a critic will toss in a few negative comments to show that he is fair-minded. Now that I have written an unfavorable review, let me (in vain) add some pleasant thoughts. As I stated at the outset, Ruth and Reitz have many helpful suggestions to offer. On almost every page, I found some argument that struck me as useful.

The problem with this book is its failure to deal with the central problem of criminal-justice policy: namely, what to do about offenders? In America, we deprive them of their freedom both as a way of expressing society's moral condemnation of crime and as a way of deterring others from committing crimes in the first place. Although prison is sometimes overused, it is uniquely appropriate for a free country. We do not torture or brainwash or manipulate offenders; we take away their freedom. Our society is more serious about this than are some other democratic societies, like England, where public opinion counts for less. As a result, we have a lower crime rate, and enjoy greater confidence in our government.

The Shape of the Future

Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order
by Robert Kagan
Knopf. 103 pp. $18.00

Reviewed by
David Pryce-Jones

"FOR A Strong Europe Against the American Evil," ran the slogan in heavy black type on a poster recently plastered over Italian walls. With the exception of Britain, polls indicate a majority in the other countries of Europe agreeing rather enthusiastically with this sentiment. As Operation Iraqi Freedom has revealed, the relationship between the United States and Europe is not the solid and mutually advantageous thing it once seemed to be but a sham, with every potential for turning ugly.

In the run-up to the war, even Arab and Muslim countries by and large swallowed their pride and accepted that Saddam Hussein was indefensible. Opposition to the United States arose instead from France, Germany, and Russia. All three owe their independence and their democratic freedoms to the United States, which has saved them from themselves more than once. Russia, still inchoate in its post-Soviet incarnation, may be a special case, but both France and Germany clearly saw the Iraq campaign as an opportunity for asserting the interests of Europe against those of the United States. Under the cover of arguments about principles and legality, they made a calculated power play.

At an earlier turning point in history, the diplomat and Soviet specialist George Kennan warned in a famous article that the democracies would have to resist the Soviet Union in its post-1945 expansion. He pointed the way ahead—to NATO, and the ultimately successful waging of the cold war. Robert Kagan, a foremost strategist and geopolitical thinker in a later generation, has had an insight comparable to Kennan's, and one that likewise outlines the shape of the future.

THE COMMON front maintained for 50 years by democratic states against totalitarianism has, of course, been eroding for a long time; but until recently, the process was all but imperceptible. September 11, 2001 and the Iraq campaign marked the breach, splintering the "West" (always something of a catch-all term) into two main components. Condemning military action against Saddam Hussein in principle, and raising alarm about its likely outcome, President Jacques Chirac of France and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany provoked a furious anti-Americanism in their own countries and a corresponding sense of European solidarity. They then tried to extend their appeal over the heads of other governments. Britain under Prime Minister Tony Blair was the most prominent European country to support the United States, but members of his own Labor party rebelled against him in a vote that

DAVID PRYCE-JONES, *the British political analyst, is a senior editor of* National Review.

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challenged his majority in parliament. The Spanish prime minister, José Maria Aznar, also supported the United States, but according to opinion polls nine in ten Spaniards did not agree with him.

In the end, France and Germany failed to mobilize other European governments behind them, and their efforts to recruit allies in the Third World also came to nothing. But, as intended, they had exposed for all to see the parting of the ways between the United States and Europe. And that is where Kagan's book comes in, published in the midst of these momentous events and based on an essay that appeared last year in the journal *Policy Review*.

In a strikingly elegant formulation, Kagan considers that the United States and Europe have come to reflect the incompatible views of the world held by two great philosophers, Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant. The former lived through the English civil war of the 1640's, whose horrors impressed on him that the law of the jungle is the natural order of mankind and that the sole resource available to tame the general beastliness is the state's possession of superior power, coupled with the resolve to wield it. Kant, on the other hand, living in the relative calm of the 18th century, maintained that reason is the tool for perfecting society and ensuring perpetual peace.

For Kagan, where exactly one stands on this continuum between the law of the jungle and the laws of reason is a profound philosophical, even metaphysical, question. He himself is in no doubt that Hobbes is the realist, and Kant the dreamer. As for the division between Europeans and Americans, the former prefer to subdue the jungle by spawning committees and paperwork; the latter turn heroic. Kagan encapsulates his central idea in an aphorism that immediately and quotably seizes the imagination: "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus."

A world-historical process is thus coming to fruition. As Kagan writes, the history of the United States since its founding has been one of accumulating strength. To its early leaders, the nation appeared "a Hercules in the cradle," and the ambition of this Hercules to play a grand role on the world stage was, Kagan believes, something deeply rooted in the national character. Often but wrongly labeled isolationists, Americans are actually idealists, convinced that their interests and the world's coincide. Successful promotion of their ideals means the exercise of power. The United States presently has the power to do as it pleases, without fear or favor, and both economics and de-

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mography suggest a protracted era of American hegemony. From this perspective, what happened after September 11 and through the Iraq campaign is that the United States has become more itself.

DURING THE years when the United States was rising toward this preeminence of power, Europe was declining. Between the world wars, Kagan reminds us, Europe first attempted to make a virtue out of weakness by means of the League of Nations and the concept of collective security. Worse than ineffective, this framework encouraged the fatal appeasement of Hitler. As others before him have done, Kagan refers to a notorious speech by Josef Goebbels in 1940 explaining that, as Hitler's threat to France had long been obvious, the French premier should have met it much earlier with a declaration of war: "Either [Hitler] disappears or we march!" Once Germany was fully armed, it was too late: the Nazis marched and the French premier disappeared.

The war to defeat Hitler destroyed the European powers and their empires. Afterward, the continent was divided between the Soviet satellite states to the east and the democracies to the west, all of whom were dependent for their defense upon the United States. Throughout the ensuing cold war, what ought to have been an enjoyable European free ride turned sour. French Gaullism and German *Ostpolitik* expressed an accumulating sense of inferiority and resentment. Tactful to a fault, Kagan does not mention that the intellectual elites on the continent were prepared to collaborate with the Soviet Union as they had done with Hitler's Germany.

Today, the UN Security Council has turned into a forum in which Europeans have once again made a virtue out of weakness: in its promise a few months ago to veto a second resolution authorizing military action against Saddam Hussein, France was deploying the only stratagem available to it for curbing the United States. But there is also another forum in which to pursue the same purpose: the European Union (EU). The original impetus behind the EU derived from the heartfelt aspiration that France and Germany would never again go to war with each other. Although Kagan at one point calls today's European Union a "miracle of world-historical importance" and at another point a "blessed miracle," it is not clear, consistent tactfulness aside, why he should deploy such high-flown language. At its inner core, where emotions turn into policy decisions, the EU for some decades has primarily defined itself as a counterweight to America.

Elements of wish-fulfillment, even fantasy, collide with EU ambitions. Although locked into irreconcilable confrontation over the campaign against Saddam Hussein, France and Britain are supposed to provide the nucleus of a European military force. One Belgian luminary has proposed that Europe need not actually build any such force, but merely pretend that it exists. In plain fact, military budgets are shrinking throughout the EU. Kagan notes that EU foreign policy is either "anemic," or mischievous as in the cases of North Korea and the Israel-Palestinian conflict, or frankly disastrous as in the former Yugoslavia.

Unable or unwilling to recapture greatness through power, Europe has no choice but to resort to the tools of the weak, reflexively preferring compromise to confrontation, resorting to inducements rather than sanctions, and establishing the primacy of unenforceable laws and treaties over the use of military power. Transnational institutions like the UN and the EU are the means to these Kantian ends.

IS ANYTHING to be done about it? Little or nothing, Kagan concludes. Americans have only to realize that they have nothing to fear from Europeans. The likes of President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder are in no position to constrain them in any way, and the successors to these men are certain to be even more Venusian. At this point, Kagan succumbs to the last of his spasms of tact. He asks the United States to "show more understanding for the sensibilities of others" and "to believe that a little common understanding could still go a long way." Such pieties bring this far-reaching essay to an unexpectedly banal ending.

Europeans are not going to alter course, or become less shrill in their accusations that the United States is a rogue colossus. Like the frog in Aesop's fable, the EU puffs itself up and makes ever more grandiose claims about its identity and reach, but it is incapable of providing democracy, unity, or strength. The conjoined outward guise of these member states may be novel, but their separate national interests are constant, pursued as hard as ever. One day, Americans are likely to have to help Europeans to save themselves—yet again.

Educationland

The Language Police:
How Pressure Groups
Restrict What Students Learn
by Diane Ravitch
Knopf. 272 pp. $24.00

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

DIANE RAVITCH'S account of censorship in educationland is at once unsurprising and stunning. It is unsurprising because many, maybe most, of her readers

DAN SELIGMAN *is a contributing editor of* Forbes.

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will start out knowing that the culture wars have long since come to the textbook and testing industries, and do not need to be reminded that educators seek to avoid anything that might be labeled racism, ageism, sexism, or any other hot-button ism, including (in a number of jurisdictions) Darwinism. Indeed Ravitch, a research professor of education at New York University and the author of seven previous books on educational themes, has often made these points herself.

But the shocker in the book is its depiction of a censorship system that is widespread, insistently formalized in endless lists of prohibited thoughts, and acquiesced in by all participants. The textbook publishers and test-preparation companies have ceased to look like victims of censorship; they long ago switched sides and have become eager to muzzle themselves. They all conduct "bias and sensitivity" reviews before publishing anything, and they all have advisory boards representing every major national/religious/ethnic background and charged with sniffing out anything offensive to any of them.

Ravitch's early chapters offer a detailed look at the censorship rules now in place. A major theme is "The New Meaning of Bias," which is the title of Chapter 2. It appears that the term "bias" now refers to any formulation that might upset a schoolchild. It also appears that educators have utterly insane notions about the emotional fragility of their charges—who are endlessly exposed via television to violence, criminality, child abuse, abortion, unwanted pregnancies, and other real-world downers yet are judged unable to deal with any references to these matters in textbooks or even reading-comprehension tests. Two further chapters elaborate the unmentionables for textbook publishers and test-development companies like the Educational Testing Service. These are followed by chapters comparing censorship from the Right (meaning mainly Christian conservatives) with that from the Left (the political correctniks).

Ravitch suggests early on that many of the prohibitions derive from complaints by the "religious Right," but I came away sensing that radical political correctness is by far the larger problem. It is true that the Christian-conservative censors are responsible for trying to suppress Darwinian evolution. They have also endlessly complained about literature depicting family conflicts, teenage sexuality, triumphant feminism, and abortion, and generally want the schools to promote their "idealized vision of the past," in Ravitch's words. A lawsuit brought against Holt, Rinehart & Winston by Tennessee fundamentalist Christians in the 1980's

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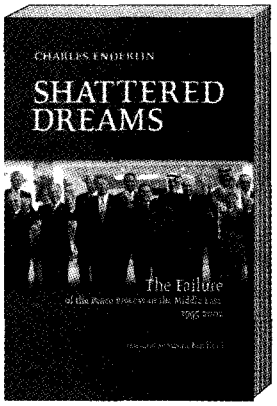

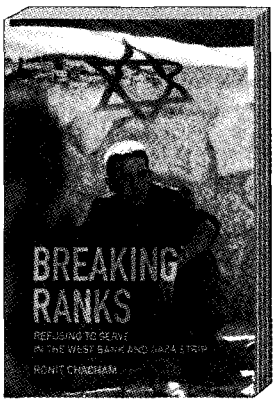

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The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995 to 2002

Charles Enderlin
Translated by Susan Fairfield

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—ROBERT JAY LIFTON,
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accused the firm of publishing elementary-school readers that, among other things, belittled the government, the military, free enterprise, and Christianity.

There is certainly a powerful whiff of philistinism in some of the Christian-conservative agenda. But it seems clear that much of what conservatives are complaining about is the depraved opposing agenda: the one in which censorship has morphed into indoctrination and spawned textbooks exalting single parenthood, Mao's China, and multiculturalism—and putting down Western civilization. Here is Ravitch on one weirdly anti-American book, a Houghton Mifflin world-history text for middle-school students:

> *To See a World* implies that every world culture is wonderful except for the United States. It lauds every world culture as advanced, complex, and rich with artistic achievement, except for the United States. Readers learn that people in the United States confront such problems as discrimination, poverty, and pollution. Those who came to this country looking for freedom, the book says, found hardship and prejudice; the immigrants did all the hard work, but the settled population hated and feared them.

The proliferation of textbooks like *To See a World* suggests that the promoters of political correctness have been making far more headway in the culture wars than the Christian conservatives. The publishers clearly despise the conservatives, and have occasionally battled them in court. They also appear to inhabit much the same mental universe as the feminists and activists coming at them from the Left. Documents submitted in the Tennessee suit against Holt, Rinehart & Winston indicate that the company's editors were privately rather sympathetic to their radical critics. One supervising editor had bitterly attacked the conservatives as totalitarians while characterizing the company's left-wing critics as "positive pressure groups."

BUT EVEN if the textbook publishers had the nerve and inclination to take on their critics, they would almost certainly not prevail. Fighting in court looks to be a losing move: Holt ultimately won the long and contentious Tennessee case in the U.S. Supreme Court, but the series at issue did not survive the bitterness engendered by the process, and was soon out of print. And challenging the critics in the arena of politics is even more problematical.

Preparing a new textbook series is enormously expensive, and makes economic sense only if it sells in a number of the larger states. Texas and California are particularly crucial, since they are the largest of the two dozen states that make statewide purchases. Both Texas and California have education departments that evaluate prospective textbooks and hold public hearings before making any purchases. The Texas hearings have often featured ambushes by conservative activists. In California, the publishers know what to expect from the state's "social content" guidelines, but meeting them presents challenges.

The California guidelines, which are written into state law, are a fantastic exercise in proportionality—with respect not only to gender and ethnicity but to occupations, all accompanied by two strictly enforced rules: (1) the number of references to each group is expected to match the state's actual demographic realities, and (2) no adverse reflections on any group. The last thing a publisher needs in this situation is to have its prospective texts denounced at the hearings for violating state standards. And so, inevitably, publishers mercilessly censor their own material in an effort to forestall any possible objections.

The details Ravitch lays on the table here are astonishing. Some are also hilarious: educational bureaucrats in California ruled against one edition of *The Little Engine That Could*—a long-time favorite in the kindergarten leagues—because the anthropomorphic engine in the illustration appeared to be male. Rated equally risible on my scorecard are the guidelines employed by Holt concerning Jews. It appears that textbooks published by the company for use in California may not depict Jews as diamond cutters, jewelers, doctors, dentists, lawyers, classical musicians, tailors, or shopkeepers. Hard-hitting outfielders appear to be okay.

Three publishers—Glencoe, Houghton Mifflin, and Prentice Hall—employ the same individual, who is based at the Council on Islamic Education, to review all references to Islam. Since criticism is unthinkable in writing about religion, the history texts are, in Ravitch's words, "tongue-tied when dealing with Islamic fundamentalism." A Harcourt Brace textbook called *World History: The Human Experience* blandly explains that the radical Islamists want to "return to Muslim traditions" (the nature of the traditions is not identified), and compares them with conservative Protestants in the United States.

The regulations governing textbook production guarantee not only that the books will be staggering bores, but that they will be expensive to produce. The expense problem is magnified by the common requirement that successive new editions bring things up to date—that modern-history texts take note of, say, the latest President, even if in a passing reference. The heavy investment costs, combined with the special expertise needed to navigate the regulatory requirements, means that the barriers to enter the industry are high. Ravitch leaves one persuaded that textbook publishers today are a regulated monopoly, not a competitive industry.

She also believes that better texts would emerge in a deregulated environment, and in a final chapter briefly outlines a three-step pro-

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posal for bringing this about. The process would begin with elimination of the statewide purchasing process; feature a "sunshine" program in which both publishers and state education departments would make public their bias-and-sensitivity guidelines; and, finally, encourage an educational system in which teachers are better-trained and less dependent on textbooks.

I did not find this convincing—possibly because the proposal is so brief and sketchy, possibly because Ravitch's program would require an aroused majority of parents who, so far, at least, show no signs of understanding that the textbooks are so terrible. And possibly because, in the pages leading up to the proposal, Ravitch has so persuasively pointed up the deeply entrenched nature of the censorship regime.

Slices of Life

McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales
Edited by Michael Chabon
Vintage. 480 pp. $13.95 (paper)

Reviewed by
Sam Munson

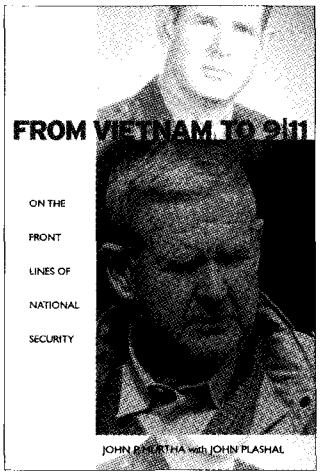
Contemporary fiction is a deceptively fertile patch of ground. More new books are being published now than perhaps ever before in recorded memory; but it is clear that amid all this Potemkin-village profusion, critical standards have been more or less gleefully left behind. One of the biggest beneficiaries of the general abandonment of critical judgment has been a magazine of new writing called *Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*—hereinafter, *McSweeney's*.

McSweeney's first appeared as a web-based operation in 1996; its presiding genius, Dave Eggers, would later become a publishing sensation as the author of *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2001), a clever if ultimately unsatisfying memoir of the years he spent raising his young brother after their parents' death. Over the course of its relatively brief existence, the magazine, rising from its humble origins as a site for absurdist humor and slices-of-postmodern-life ("An Interview With Parken Ward Brown, Age Two, On The Recent Visit Of Local TV Weatherman Ben Gelber To His Preschool," and the like), has set up its own publishing imprint, by now the most visible part of the fiefdom. Serving as a clearing-house for the sallies of young, chic authors, McSweeney's Books has issued Lawrence Krauser's *Lemon*, Amy Futterman's *The Pharmacist's Mate*, Stephen Dixon's *I.*, *The Neal Pollack Anthology of American Literature*, and Eggers's own sophomore effort, *And You Will Know Our Velocity*. The books, like the magazine, are harmless but thin and wholly unmemorable.

But now *McSweeney's* has tried something new, bringing out, for its tenth issue, a collection of what is generally and dismissively known as "genre fiction": horror stories, sci-fi, western yarns, and so forth. Issued in book form, *McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales* is, if not exactly thrilling, at least a very good read.

This should not come as a shock. The idea for the *Treasury* originated with the well-known writer Michael Chabon, whose own novels, particularly *Wonder Boys* (1996) and *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2001) embody the qualities that writers normally appearing in *McSweeney's* aim for but seldom achieve: compelling renderings of the at once hilarious and deeply sad cultural tropes of American life. In his introduction, indeed, Chabon declares the *Treasury* to be an effort to move away from "the

Sam Munson, *a new contributor, is a graduating senior at the University of Chicago.*



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Thomas Hardy and the Law: Legal Presences in Hardy's Life and Fiction

by William A. Davis

Davis explores Hardy's legal research and friendships, his work as a Dorchester magistrate, nineteenth-century legal reform, actual Victorian law cases from which Hardy drew material for his novels, the legal "machinery" of his novels, and his advocacy of reform of the marriage laws.

Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield

by Elizabeth R. Lambert

This study details the domestic life and private friendships of British statesman, orator, and political thinker Edmund Burke from 1750, when he left Dublin to study law at Middle Temple, London, until his wife Jane's death in 1812, fifteen years after Burke's. The facts of Burke's public life are familiar, but the man who—at the height of his career—identified himself to a passing stranger as "Burke of Beaconsfield" is less well known.

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contemporary, quotidian, plotless, revelatory moment-of-truth story"—precisely the kind of story that is, alas, the *McSweeney's* stock in trade. (Think of the bloodless crossroads where Raymond Carver and John Barth meet.)

PARTLY BY dint of what it avoids, the *Treasury* must be called a success. Which is not to say that its contents amount to great literature. Most of it is not even good. But this collection is both more inviting and much more pleasurable to read than the magazine's normal mélange of turgid prose and graduate-seminar emoting. And it includes one standout offering: Nick Hornby's "Otherwise Pandemonium." Nominally a story about a VCR that predicts the end of the world, this tale by the author of *High Fidelity* (1996) and *About A Boy* (1999) eschews metaphysical speculation or tawdry displays of self to focus on something much more interesting: the lusts and insecurities that are the central emotional material of adolescence. It would be pretentious to call "Otherwise Pandemonium" a meditation on human resilience, but it does slyly nod in that direction.

Although not of the same caliber, other stories in the *Treasury* are also worth mentioning. Chris Offutt, a writer of the My-Old-Dysfunctional-Kentucky-Home school, here sets aside the bleak tone of his 1998 novel *The Good Brother* to give us, in "Chuck's Bucket," a clever, highly self-referential tale of time travel and (of all unlikely subjects) the petty frustrations of the writing life. Elmore Leonard's "How Carlos Webster Changed His Name to Carl and Became a Famous Oklahoma Lawman" showcases this hardboiled author's trademark combination of dry humor, taut prose, and exactly the right amount of pulpiness. And then there is "The Bees" by Dan Chaon, a writer whose short-story collection *Among The Missing* was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2001; an atmospheric yarn about the demons haunting a former alcoholic, "The Bees" is genuinely and satisfyingly creepy.

There are two low points amid all the high-octane action. Rick Moody's interminable "The Albertine Notes" begins with a promising piece of noirish cyberpunk—a drug that allows its users to relive their memories as an anodyne to the rigors of life in a post-apocalyptic New York City—but devolves into a series of deadly and drearily earnest maunderings. Worse still, and the real nadir of the collection, is Dave Eggers's "Up A Mountain Coming Down Slowly," the story of a group of boorish Americans on a touristy jaunt on Kilimanjaro that drags with exquisite slowness over events as trivial as they are meant to be portentous and feels as long as the climb itself.

IN ANNOUNCING the publication of the *Treasury* on their website, the editors of *McSweeney's* fended off expected accusations of philistinism by archly declaring that their hope was to put out a book that would be salable "in supermarkets and airports." Their dream has come true: the *Treasury* is such a book, and it has indeed been selling.

Moreover, it deserves its success: unfortunately for the pretensions of Eggers and company, most of the stories in the *Treasury* surpass any of the more self-consciously highbrow fare published under the *McSweeney's* imprint. Merely to juxtapose one of the *Treasury's* tales of derring-do with the sort of "plotless" contemporary fiction in which Eggers and his friends specialize is to see how much the latter have to learn from the vast congeries of junk fiction that, for better or worse, forms a significant part of our literary landscape. Heavy-handed and vaguely emotive prose wedded to trite, utterly sentimental ideas may provide brief spasms of excitement for those wishing to *feel* literary, but those seeking literary pleasure are right to

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look elsewhere—even among cowboys, ghosts, and reptilian nightmares out of H. Rider Haggard.

Class Action

The Rule of Lawyers: How the New Litigation Elite Threatens America's Rule of Law
by Walter Olson
St. Martin's. 352 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Barton Aronson

In *The Litigation Explosion* (1991), Walter Olson provided a trenchant analysis of the forces behind the American propensity to settle every sort of dispute by going to court. In his new book, Olson, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, revisits this terrain, focusing on one particularly alarming aspect of the problem: the rise of an ambitious, politically connected, and extraordinarily well-compensated tort-litigation elite. As he shows, these masters of the class-action lawsuit—a procedural tool that allows a handful of allegedly injured plaintiffs to represent a large number of (in legal parlance) "similarly situated" people—are far indeed from the public-spirited defenders of the "little guy" that they pretend to be.

Lawsuits related to defective manufactured goods have been with us a long time, but were kept within narrow bounds for most of the country's history by a legal culture that emphasized restraint. On this older view, as Olson writes, "litigation was something to be discouraged, a destructive and costly last resort." Things began to change, he reports, in the late 1970's, as litigation came to be seen as "an engine of social progress," especially against corporate malefactors. One prominent legal ethicist went so far as to write of a "professional responsibility to chase ambulances."

Along with this cultural shift came a legal one. Procedural rules were changed in ways that made them more favorable to plaintiffs, and courts began to recognize new grounds for legal action, like "negligent security," which permitted crime victims to sue commercial property-owners for failing to provide, say, sufficient lighting in a parking lot. More fatefully, lawyers for plaintiffs began to take more of their cases on "contingency," earning nothing if their clients lost but taking up to 40 percent of any award. The net effect was to make suing, especially in volume, a far more attractive way to make a living.

The first of the new breed of lawsuits discussed by Olson got its start in the late 1980's, when some women who had received silicon breast implants began to suffer from vaguely defined connective-tissue disorders, a problem that a handful of doctors attributed to their implants. Almost overnight, a legal cottage industry sprang up. Trial lawyers actively recruited aggrieved clients and gathered medical testimony, and they also successfully lobbied for a federal ban on silicon implants, thus persuading much of the public that the devices were harmful. The suits that followed made millions of dollars for the lawyers and their clients, and drove Dow Corning, the biggest maker of the implants, into bankruptcy.

But the claims were all smoke and mirrors. Within a few years, Olson reports, the scientific community had universally rejected any link between silicon and the disorders attributed to it. The ban on implants was rescinded, and the suits dried up—yet the damage was not so easily contained. The lawyers had succeeded in traumatizing not just

Barton Aronson *is a lawyer in Washington, D.C. and a columnist for* Findlaw.com.

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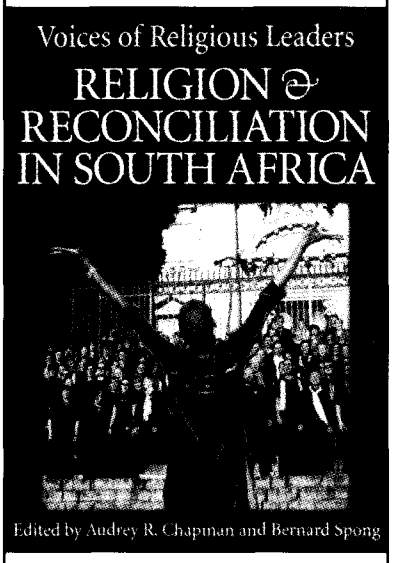

Instrumental in post-apartheid South Africa's efforts to come to terms with its past, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was led by clerics rather than lawyers and judges and was shaped by and imbued with religious content. Its final report was submitted to the Mandela administration in October, 1998.

This volume springs from a series of in-depth interviews in which 33 key religious leaders illuminate issues and questions raised by the TRC. Some of their conclusions are not what you might expect.

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a whole class of women but the makers of a range of medical devices using silicon, who feared mounting litigation costs. Only congressional action to limit the liability of these manufacturers averted a crisis in the availability of such critical items as artificial heart valves.

Still, radical though they were in practice, the implant lawsuits looked in other respects like traditional product-liability cases. More recently, as Olson shows, tort lawyers have made more grandiose claims for their work. They have declared themselves to be not just righters of corporate wrongs but "tribunes of the overall public interest," able to win reforms that have been blocked by the vested interests that dominate legislatures. For Harvard Law School's Laurence Tribe, class-action suits are a remedy for the democratic options that have been "ruled out by the lobbying power of . . . industry."

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As Olson points out, however, the elected branches of government have been far from inactive on the issues taken up by the best known of the recent class-action suits. Consider tobacco. In exchange for dropping threatened litigation, the states have won a settlement that will eventually bring them some $250 billion from the big cigarette-makers. But they had never been exactly shy about taxing and regulating the industry's product in the first place. One can disagree with the balance struck in this long history of public oversight, but the notion that Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds had previously succeeded in stymieing legislative action does not bear scrutiny.

As for the claim that tort lawyers somehow possess a "superior pipeline to the state of the public will," this, Olson writes, is "absurd." The latest campaign of the litigators is an effort to hold gun manufacturers liable for the costs imposed on government by gun-related crime. In taking this route, Olson observes, the lawyers are plainly defying popular opinion. Majorities of Americans favor a private right to own guns, and they oppose, by a margin of two-to-one, the idea that the makers of guns are somehow responsible for the actions of criminals who use them.

Olson recognizes that, in some instances, trial lawyers may indeed be able to "cut through" the "bickering and indecisiveness" of the democratic process and, by force of law, "get things done." As he rightly observes, though, this is "merely to beg the question: if just getting things done is the main priority, why then do we go to such lengths to constrain the powers held by 'real' government officials?"

TORT LITIGATORS have been energetic in protecting and extending their franchise. As Olson documents, they shop around for jurisdictions where judges are still elected and where lavish campaign contributions can make or break a run for the bench. They fund their own think tanks and watchdog groups (including Ralph Nader's vast network), and they lobby hard to head off any change in the laws and procedures from which they profit.

All this is true enough; but it is also not the whole story. One weakness of Olson's analysis is his reluctance, amid so much rich and damning anecdotal material, to acknowledge progress against the power of the trial lawyers. He pays scant attention to the recent history of tort reform, or to changes in the laws governing the use of science in the courtroom, or to the increasingly successful efforts to modify the rules by which class-action suits proceed. Although he notes that most states attempted to impose limits on the tort-litigation industry during the 1990's, he does not say what shape these reforms took, or whether they have survived court challenges.

Sometimes Olson simply ignores good news. He recounts the dirty tactics used by tort lawyers in the 1996 election for Alabama's high court, but neglects to tell us how the episode ended: the moderates won, and the court's new majority began immediately to rein in practices that had made Alabama so welcoming a haven for outrageous litigation. Even the Alabama legislature joined in, enacting reforms that brought the state's loose class-action standards more into line with the stricter federal approach.

There is evidence, in short, that the future is brighter than Walter Olson suggests. Thanks in no small measure to his own longstanding effort to expose them, the abuses of tort litigators are now well known, even by the general public. One just wishes that in describing so well the continuing threat of the "rule of lawyers," he had been more willing to credit his own success.

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The Social Engineers

Diversity:
The Invention of a Concept
by Peter Wood
Encounter. 351 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Barring unforeseen developments, the Supreme Court will soon hand down its decisions in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* and *Gratz* v. *Bollinger*, the twin affirmative-action cases arising from the University of Michigan. These are the hottest and most closely watched disputes of the Court's present term, the first time it has focused squarely on affirmative action in university admissions since the 1978 *Bakke* decision.*

The Supreme Court is very different today—only Justices Stevens and Rehnquist span the entire quarter-century—and so in some ways is America. There are 64 million more of us, for one thing, and blacks have been superseded by Hispanics as our largest minority. Though 82 percent of the population is still white, our demography is notably more complex, with millions more Asians, many immigrants from the former Soviet empire, many more Muslims, and plenty of people and families and communities that blend racial, ethnic, religious, and national origins in striking palettes. Even as we can now find U.S. neighborhoods that sound and smell like Odessa, Warsaw, Havana, Dacca, Cairo, and Yokahama, we also find streets where one can stroll from a Vietnamese pho restaurant to a Pakistani kebab house to a taqueria to a bratwurst emporium.

Because it has been our pattern for—literally—centuries, this constant freshening of the demographic stream has come, for many Americans, to resemble a fact of life, almost a natural phenomenon. The cases now before the Supreme Court, however, have little to do with the natural diversity that enriches America and enlivens its culture. What the Justices must contend with is capital-D Diversity: diversity as an ideology, and as a principle of social engineering—and one whose endlessly contentious pursuit has complicated and, indeed, undermined the very conditions that foster small-d diversity.

Peter Wood's exemplary book explains where Diversity came from, and why it has become such a problem. A professor of anthropology at Boston University, Wood has written a first-rate biography of an idea—and one that has the additional merit of including an evocative account of what diversity meant for Americans before Diversity was invented. Wood shows, for example, how fascinated our predecessors were by tribes and places unlike their own, and how earnestly they sought to understand "foreign" cultures. He also links the romance of "the other" to 19th-century science, especially Darwin's insight into how creatures change, evolve, and mutate, with their differences sometimes turning out to be assets and sometimes liabilities. And he devotes a solid chapter to the multiple meanings and uses of the word "diversity," its synonyms and metaphors.

Most of Wood's volume, however, is a perceptive and closely reasoned examination of the spread and implications of contemporary Diversity. Though it has antecedents in academic relativism and artistic postmodernism, Diversity found its present meaning, Wood contends, within the Supreme Court's own marble temple, and specifically in Justice Lewis Powell's "wildly eccentric opinion" in *Bakke* that, while strict racial quotas were constitutionally suspect, it was permissible for universities to take other steps to attain "a diverse student body." Here is one characteristically muddy passage, cited by Wood, from Powell's opinion:

> The file of a particular black applicant may be examined for his potential contribution to diversity without the factor of race being decisive when compared, for example, with that of an applicant identified as Italian-American if the latter is thought to exhibit qualities more likely to promote beneficial educational pluralism.

"Potential contribution to diversity." "Beneficial educational pluralism." From such phrases have come much mischief and vast controversy, extending far beyond university admissions procedures to infect our politics, our business practices, the workings of our government, and almost every other aspect of our national life. And what an unholy mess has thereby been spawned! A *New York Times* reporter who recently visited the University of Michigan to profile some of the "untold tiny ways that affirmative action comes to life" under a Diversity regime described for her readers how one professor prepares for his daily class in constitutional law by shuffling 91 cards with pictures of his students so as to ensure that those he calls upon will be adequately "representative" by the norms of Diversity:

> Like a blackjack dealer in a casino, he shuffles the [two] piles, which are split by sex, then deals out ten cards from each. . . . "I've got three black students out of twenty, which is plenty," Professor Primus said one recent morning [as he rejected one loquacious conservative white male because "I don't need to call on him."]. . . . Once he had twenty viable cards, the young professor turned to the more delicate process of sequencing, starting with the women's pile. . . . "I want to make sure the conversation in the first few minutes includes some women," he said. "I won't call on three men in a row. It's just too much."

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*For more on this subject, see "The Scandal of 'Diversity'" by Jonathan Kay, starting on page 41 of this issue—Ed.

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THE AVOWED purpose of such grotesque exercises, as Wood explains, "is that once individuals of diverse backgrounds are brought together, a transformation will take place in people's attitudes—primarily within the members of the formerly exclusive group." For that halcyon day to arrive, however, human nature has to be suspended and innate social behaviors curbed, as everything of value—at least everything that once belonged the "the formerly exclusive group"—is parceled out according to Diversity's approved classifications. And doing *that* means destroying the very principle on which Diversity presumably rests: the principle, that is, that people should be treated as individuals, with the right to be judged by their deeds and accomplishments and not by arbitrary and discriminatory categories of race, religion, sex, and so forth. Instead, Diversity reorders society into groups defined by those very categories, with extra points awarded for being a "person of color," female (or gay), disabled, poor, old, non-English speaking, slow to learn, and the like.

When group scores become the basis for allocating "social goods," and when Diversity itself comes to be viewed as an overriding good, traditional forms of small-d diversity are the first to fall by the wayside. The *Times* reporter visiting Ann Arbor remarked on how black students "are almost always huddled together in the hallways, the snack bars, the library, and even in many classrooms." She also found that blacks and other beneficiaries of Diversity at Michigan had a decidedly mixed attitude toward it. Some were cynical, noting that many black students came from wealthy families or held private-school diplomas and did not really need the help. Others resented being viewed as ingredients in someone else's academic experience: "I'm not here to enhance any white kid's education," said one.

And that is just the beginning of it. Herculean attempts to unmelt the American melting pot and engineer the demographics of our institutions might conceivably be defensible if they truly improved race relations or, in the case of universities, educational quality. But there is increasing evidence that this is far from the case. In an imaginative recent study, the social scientists Stanley Rothman, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Neil Nevitte surveyed the attitudes toward these issues of more than 4,000 students, professors, and administrators on 140 campuses, and then separately correlated their responses with objective data about institutional demographics. Here is their most telling conclusion:

> As the proportion of black students rose, students' satisfaction with their collegiate experience dropped, as did their assessment of the quality of their education and the work ethic of their peers. In addition, the higher the enrollment diversity, the more likely students were to say that they had personally experienced discrimination on campus.

Similar patterns appeared in faculty and administrator responses. Even after controlling for other factors, the analysts found that the greater a school's diversity, the greater its students' dissatisfaction with their educational experience—*and* the more apt they were to perceive "unfair treatment."

This study appeared too late to be included in *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept*, but Wood's book explains with painful clarity why its findings should not have come as a surprise. It also prepares us for the future: no matter what the Supreme Court decides in the Michigan cases, Diversity will continue to wreak its damage on the fabric of our national enterprise. For Diversity, as Wood observes at the close,

> is now so indispensable to American party politics, so rooted in the marketing practices of American business, so overwritten into government regulations, and so tenderly looked after by higher education that it cannot simply vanish. . . . Even should we as a nation choose to put it behind us, Diversity will linger in the lives already mortgaged to the notion that we are but members of identity groups, not free people who chart our own lives.

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The fracas over what to teach children about September 11, 2001, revealed a deep fault line within the school subject known as "social studies."

Put simply, one camp believes that social studies classes should help children feel good about themselves, be nice to others, and learn to respect all cultures, with minimal attention to traditional history, geography, and civics. The other camp holds that the schools' job is to transmit information to children about their shared American culture, how it works, and where it came from. Guess which side is winning?

The overwhelming majority of September 11 curricular guidance that teachers received from the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Education Association, and many others focused on pop psychotherapy. A year after the attacks, the underlying assumption in the renewed flood of instructional advice was still that children needed to be comforted, reassured, and admonished not to cast blame or show bias toward any group, religion, or country.

One found little in the curricular suggestions about who attacked us and why. There was even less about America's core values of freedom and equality and why the world's fanatics and fundamentalists abhor these. There was nothing about the difference between democracy and theocracy. Although New York's noble firefighters and police came in for some praise, little was made of the many acts of heroism on September 11 and nary a word about the brutal villains who killed thousands of innocents on that bright September morning. Nor were there lessons from history about how America responded on previous occasions when its principles have been challenged, its freedoms attacked, and its sovereignty assaulted.

Not surprisingly, "patriotism" was almost completely absent from these recommended lesson plans. One was more apt to find warnings against jingoism.

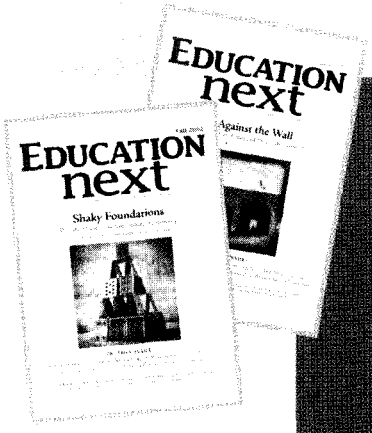
Many teachers sensibly ignored all this advice and did what they thought right. The youngsters I spoke to about September 11 reported that on the anniversary they wore something red, white, and blue to school, recited the Pledge of Allegiance, maybe spent a few minutes remembering the events of a year earlier, and (in private schools) said a prayer. That was about it. Then back to multiplication and division, verbs and nouns, whatever.

Perhaps an important "teachable moment" was thus wasted. But at least these teachers did not make matters worse on September 11. Yet the social studies curriculum for which they are responsible all year long, day in and day out, is far more apt to embrace the worldview of the National Council for the Social Studies than the priorities of patriotic Americans, as are the textbooks, the ed-school courses in which tomorrow's teachers are prepared, and their professional journals.

Social studies needs a top-to-bottom overhaul. We will do an important service to the memory of our heroes and those they left behind if, by September 11, 2003, this overhaul is well under way.

— *Chester E. Finn Jr.*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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